

School of Theology at Claremont



1001 1421778



Theology Library  
SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY  
AT CLAREMONT  
California









BX  
9843  
F8

THE GOSPELS, HISTORICAL

ADDRESS DELIVERED AT THE UNITARIAN CONFERENCE

IN WASHINGTON, D. C., OCTOBER, 1895

AND OTHER SERMONS

BY

W. H. FURNESS, D.D.

Published by

THE UNITARIAN BOOK ROOM ASSOCIATION,

1102 Walnut St., Philadelphia.

1896





THE first edition of this book was printed for private circulation, and has all been given away. The demand for it, however, has been sufficient to warrant the printing of another edition, that those who wish for these last words may be gratified.

ANNIS LEE WISTER.

February 10, 1896.

333999



## CONTENTS

---

	PAGE
ADDRESS AT WASHINGTON . . . . .	7
SELF-ABNEGATION . . . . .	27
THE RESURRECTION OF JESUS . . . . .	43
GOD IS LOVE . . . . .	59
A GLAD RELIGION . . . . .	72
JESUS AND CHRISTIANITY . . . . .	86
OUR TROUBLES; GOD'S ANGELS . . . . .	107



#### ADDRESS AT WASHINGTON

THE study for many years of the Internal Evidence of the truth of the Gospels has resulted in a conclusion as to their truth, which my aim now is to set before you to the best of my ability. I confidently trust that it will be accepted by you all, however skeptical you may be, as to the truth in regard to the contents and origin of the four Gospels. This most satisfactory conclusion is simply this :

The Religion for which Jesus lived and suffered death was, in all respects, perfectly natural, as natural as the rising of the sun. What he is recorded in the Gospels to have said and done, is in the closest conformity to the laws of Nature. His works were extraordinary natural facts. He declared they were done by God. And as explicitly he said that they were wrought as God always works, by a law of Nature, by the highest law of Nature, the law of the Supremacy of mind over matter, of Spirit over the flesh.

Man is naturally possessed of reason and conscience, enabling him to know the right from the wrong, to hate the one and to love the other. He is possessed also of instinctive sympathies, which bind men to mutual

help by the ties of kindred, of family, and of a common nature.

Thus is he provided with the instruments and opportunities for that Humane Spirit: the Spirit of Love, for which Jesus lived and died, the Holy Spirit of God, the Divine Force, present in man as in everything that exists.

But in this world man is in his infancy. In the earliest times, although the highest and best in him was only feebly developed, he saw, indeed, that there were invisible Powers over all. The manifold evils of life, physical, moral, intellectual; earthquakes, inundations, evils terrible in their consequences, sweeping away thousands of creatures, appalled him, and his startled imagination saw in these convulsions of Nature and in the devastation of the mystery of death, the power of unseen gods, expressing their wrath and cruelty, just as men do. Thus what was named religion was polytheistic and anthropomorphic.

Amidst the teeming mysteries of Being, one thing, however, is discernible. Throughout the Universe there is apparent a purpose, or tendency, out of good to evolve a better, even the worst working to the same end, slowly, indeed, but in the Supreme Power's own good time. Accordingly, it has come to be thought that man has descended (or rather ascended) from well-nigh the lowest forms of being—from the ascidian and the ape. In the primitive, prehistoric ages, reason

and conscience being very feebly developed in them, men became the victims of an inflamed imagination, and, as I have just said, they saw in the terrible mysteries of suffering and death, the agency of a multitude of invisible Powers, wreaking upon man their wrath and vengeance. Thus he created gods after his own likeness.

Among the ancient nations the Hebrews believed in only one Supreme God, the Sovereign Power over all. Prophets and seers among them caught flashes of great truths of the duties of man. In their Scriptures a sense of justice and humanity appears.

At last, two thousand years ago, there appeared the Man of Nazareth. The religion of his country had then become a thing of childish rites and traditions, passing over Justice and the Love of God. It was insisted that eating with unwashed hands, or with people of other nations, was sinful in the sight of God. It taught that it was a more sacred duty to give money for the support of the temple-worship and of the priests, than to honor and support one's aged parents.

Jesus had penetrated, I have said, to the heart of the old Hebrew faith, and had found in it the two great Commandments, enjoining the supreme love of the Highest and Best, and the love of one's neighbor as of oneself.

He was thus enabled, I repeat, to distinguish

what he conceived to be the essential soul of the religion of his country, not by any miraculous illumination from Heaven, but by his native, original insight into the soul of man. Men are variously gifted, in greater or less degree. Jesus was thus endowed by Nature with an extraordinary religious genius, so to speak. He saw the Spirit of God in every human being: the undying Life of the Creator, distinguishing man from every other created being of which we have any knowledge. "The literary kings of the world," says Heine, "met in council and elected William Shakespeare emperor of the Literature of the world." So Jesus, not by election, but by the influence he has had upon mankind for two thousand years, is proved to be the greatest Saviour of the world.

We know very little of Jesus before he appeared, publicly teaching, when he was about thirty years of age. He held obedience to the two great commandments as the first of all laws, far above all traditions and symbols. This is strikingly shown in one instance when a teacher of the Law, that is of Judaism as it then existed, one of the clergy of that day, came to him and asked him what he should do to inherit eternal life. In reply Jesus asked the teacher what he thought himself. And when the teacher repeated the two great commandments, Jesus bade him go and do them: "This do and thou shalt live"—become con-



scious of a higher life than this life of the frail body. Jesus did not require the teacher to believe in him. He made no reference whatever to himself.

This, by the way, is no reason why we should think the less of him, by far our greatest Inspirer of truth and love. It is a special and powerful reason why we should think all the more of him, and have a new, deeper sense of his greatness of mind, of his superiority to all self-concern.

We are told only that "he grew up in favor with God and man." There is, however, one incident related of him which bears the self-evident, inimitable marks of truth and nature. When he was twelve years of age he went, for the first time, to the great city of Jerusalem to the Feast of the Passover, whither the Jews from far and near were flocking. His youthful imagination had been excited by all that he had heard of the beauty and grandeur of the Temple. When he saw that his parents were preparing to return to their home in Galilee, he ran off to take a last look of the Temple. There he happened to ask some question of a passing priest. The priest, struck by his appearance, and the pertinency of his inquiry, fell into conversation with him. Gradually a little crowd gathered around them. By and by his mother came to him and reproached him for putting his father and herself upon such a weary hunt for him. "Why," he virtually asked her, "why did you not look for me here in the

Temple" (literally), "among my Father's things," not as the Common Version has it, "on my Father's business."

That, as he grew up, "he grew in favor with God and man," shows that he manifested such qualities of mind and heart as won the admiration of all who had any acquaintance with him. He was looked upon as no ordinary child. When at thirty years of age he solemnly devoted himself to the office of a reformer, going about from town to town in Galilee, speaking in the synagogues on the Sabbath, or from a hillside, or on the shores of the lake, when the crowds that he drew to him became too large for any building to hold, we gather from the character of his teaching that he had been from his earliest childhood, and was always, in special and intimate communication with nature and with human life. In the workings of nature and in the manners and customs of life, in the sunshine and in the rain, in the seed cast into the ground by the sower, in the tares and the wheat, in the leaven put into bread, in children playing in the market-place and "making believe," a funeral or a wedding procession,—in all that could happen under his eye he found some message of wisdom or of the Divine Goodness. His conviction was strong and deep that the One Supreme Power is a God of Love. It is Jesus who has taught us all to call that Power our Father in Heaven.

The whole tenor of his teaching shows that he had thoroughly studied the temper of his countrymen. He had not undertaken the office of teaching, without understanding that obloquy, persecution and a violent death awaited him if he dared to speak boldly out what he was moved to say ; especially did he read the hearts of those who claimed to be the exclusive guides of the people. All this he saw. It was as plain to him as the sun in heaven. He said, at the last, that no man took his life from him, that he gave it up voluntarily. He saw that his death, the utter sacrifice of himself on the Cross, would speak, as nothing else could, for his own sincerity and for the truth for which he died, accounting it worth the sacrifice.

No, he was no fanatic, carried away by the wild creations of an inflamed imagination, thirsting to provoke his persecutors to make him a martyr. He saw that his death would prove not only his sincerity, but the priceless value of the truth to which he had given utterance.

And what a powerful proof it was ! For two thousand years the power of his Cross, the mighty symbol of his devoted love, has acted and it is still acting upon mankind with inexhaustible, ever-increasing effect. Wherever it goes, there go humanity and civilization.

Even the countless conflicting sects, into which Christendom is divided, each magnifying its own creed as the only means of salvation, are, nevertheless, all

agreed in one thing, which all hold to be of essential importance, namely, the Office of Humanity,—to help the poor, the suffering, the ignorant, the sinful. All, Catholics and Protestants of every name, are unconsciously advancing the kingdom of Heaven.

Is it not strange, passing all words, that it is not seen by all that that in which all are thus unconsciously agreed as absolutely essential, must be not only true, but the greatest truth, above all creeds and dogmas? The old theologies go upon the utterly unauthorized assumption that, while bountiful provision is made for the needs of this brief, mortal life of ours, no provision is made by Nature to satisfy the wants of the immortal soul, the hunger for perfection, for knowledge, the two great distinguishing constituents of man's nature, and that to save the soul from perdition, it was necessary to break through the Divine laws in order to introduce the instruments and means of salvation.

Science, now so widely diffused, is atheistic, or at least, irreligious. It sees nothing but mechanical and chemical causes in that sublimest of studies, astronomy, nothing that prompts to adoration, to worship; it recognizes, indeed, a blind, unintelligent Power in all the laws of Nature, which it names Force, and it knows no more. But has that Force ever been looked for in man, in the emotions and sentiments of the human heart?

These emotions are no creations of man's. They

are instances of the very same Force, so called, that is apparent in the trees and the grass, in the stars of heaven, and in the flowers of the field. Were they who study the external, physical world in any of its infinitely various departments aware of this fact, did they see the all-pervading Force in themselves and in others, did they see it in pity for the suffering, in adoration, in love, they would have at once in themselves the witness of the Spirit, of the Life of God in the soul of man. They would, involuntarily, unconsciously, find themselves in unison with the spirit of Jesus, one with him who gave up his life for the Truth which is to re-create the world. But the case is far otherwise. They who study external Nature do not see in the emotions of the heart the same so-called Force that they see everywhere else.

And why is it so? Why is it that the indestructible power which men perceive everywhere but in themselves, is hidden from those who are studying the motions and laws of the material world?

The cause of this blindness is obvious. It is because it is not looked for, where alone it can be found, in the primitive records of the Religion of Jesus, for these records, it is insisted by all sects, represent him and all that he said and did as preternatural; they maintain that he had a divine nature superadded to his human nature and that his works were miracles, violations of natural laws, and not simply extraordinary natural

facts. Consequently all who are familiar with the universal inviolability of the laws of Nature are slow to believe in miracles, that is, in the popular sense of the word, in departures from natural law, which lack the indispensable condition of harmonizing with all known, or probable truths. All true facts are in accord with all truth : *Omne verum consonat vero*. No one of any intelligence believes in miracles, especially if the report of them comes from a remote and barbarous age.

Jesus, as no one before or since, saw God *in* man, as well as in the Universe. His knowledge of this great truth was so perfect that he lived and died for it. He declared that he could say and do nothing of himself, that it was his Father in heaven who spoke and worked through him. So possessed was he with this truth, it so deepened his sense of being, the consciousness of his own personality, that he never adjured any higher Power *out of himself*, to aid him in working those sudden and extraordinary cures. "Young man," he said to the dead son of the widow, "*I say unto thee, arise,*" and to the daughter of Jairus, "*Maid, arise !*" He felt God *within* him. It was God there, within, that prompted his words and works. When, on one occasion, a man brought his child to him afflicted with convulsions, and said to Jesus, "If thou canst do anything for us, help us," Jesus said (virtually) to the man,—such is the true reading correctly punctuated of

the original Greek—"What do you mean by asking me if I can? Do you believe. All things are possible to him who believes." In what is related of Jesus, all is perfectly conformable to the laws of human nature and of all nature.

There is no respect in which this is more remarkable than in reference to the origin of those first writings that appeared about Jesus.

As there is no collateral evidence of the existence of the Gospels until the beginning of the second century, it has been concluded by many that they have no historical authority whatever, that their contents can only be legendary, written so long after the final disappearance of Christ. But Luke tells us in ch. i. v. 1, that when he wrote his Gospel, there were many accounts of Jesus in existence, written by persons who obtained their knowledge of him directly from "eyewitnesses and ministers of the word." And the Gospels show decisive marks that what they relate was used in making up the Gospels in the form in which we now have them. The Apostles were too busy in telling about Jesus by word of mouth, in discharging their Apostolic office, and, moreover, they believed that Jesus was coming in power and great glory in that generation. He might come at any moment. Of what use could written accounts be when all the people would see him for themselves, and know all about

him? But as the generation who would thus see him was thinned by death, the accounts written by the many, of whom Luke tells us, began to have value. And those who prepared our present Gospels used those accounts made by "the many," giving the names of Matthew, Mark and Luke to those which they knew to have been obtained from Matthew, Mark and Luke, respectively. Harmonizing as they do with one another, and with John, they are proved to have come from eye-witnesses.

It is natural to conclude that these "many," of whom Luke tells us, unknown persons, were moved chiefly by the simple, natural desire to preserve the memory of the words and works of Jesus, which interested them so greatly. They had no thought of multiplying copies, of publishing them. They procured the desired information for themselves and for their friends, as Luke prepared his Gospel for his friend Theophilus. I have said that written accounts were made well nigh contemporaneously with the events recorded; but most probably shortly after the final disappearance of Jesus. We read in John's Gospel of certain Greeks, who were in Jerusalem at that time of the Jewish Passover, and who wanted to see Jesus, the man who was creating such a sensation, of whom all the world was talking. Pilate, you recollect, caused the inscription, which he had put upon the Cross, to be in Greek and Latin as well as in Hebrew, from which we gather



that the Jewish Festival drew many foreigners, Romans as well as Greeks, to Jerusalem. Travelling in those days was accounted the chief, almost the only, means of education.

From the slightest examination of these three Gospels, it is evident, as I have said, that, in their preparation, use was made of those previous records, by "the many" which were considered the most valuable, directly obtained from eye-witnesses. No order of time or place is observed in the three Gospels. We cannot tell how long the public life of Jesus lasted. There is not apparent in them the shadow of an intention to describe him and tell us what manner of person he was. They are obviously disconnected narratives of his sayings and works.

The truth and exceeding beauty of it all is that from this utterly undesigned method of compilation, we gather a wonderfully consistent idea of what sort of a person Jesus was. He came, as he declared, to reform his own people. He was moved by the profoundest pity for his poor countrymen. He looked upon them as sheep having no shepherd to care for them, tyrannized over by those who imposed upon them the most irksome forms and childish traditions. He visited the poor and those who were despised in their humble abodes, sat down at the table with them, partook of their coarse food. The finger of scorn was pointed at him because he kept company

with publicans, odious Roman taxgatherers, and men of abandoned character. He was looked upon as no better than they. The people from far and near followed him in crowds, until they were ready to drop. They listened to him gladly. He thus incurred the deadly hatred of those who claimed to be the only authorized guides of the people. They looked upon him as a dangerous misleader of the people—he must be stopped, be put to death.

We thus gather from the first three Gospels, compiled without any thought of endeavoring to keep in harmony with one another, that with the tenderest consideration for the poor, he united the bold, uncompromising spirit of a reformer. He spared no terms in denouncing the evil and corrupt practices of the leaders of the people.

Most of his sayings and of his works recorded in the Gospels, were, doubtless, the most striking things said and done by him. It is not to be supposed that he never opened his mouth but to give utterance to a great, world-saving thought. On one occasion, he said that when any one made a feast he should not call his friends and rich neighbors together, but invite the poor. This was a word for the time. There were in those days no houses and homes for the poor, no hospitals for the sick and the maimed. Lepers were driven into the desert. The influence of Jesus has made this precept obsolete.

Again, when he once chanced to be at a feast where he observed how the guests crowded for the best seats, he virtually admitted as an allowable motive of conduct, a desire for worldly consideration. He said, if such is your desire, the right way to succeed is to take your place low down at the table, and then when the host comes to see his guests and discovers that no one was there who was not invited, and finds you at the bottom of the table, he will request you to take your place higher up; this was worldly wisdom.

It is not easy to determine how far Jesus sympathized with his countrymen in regard to their superstitious ideas. Did he believe in a personal devil? In the Lord's prayer the petition, "Deliver us from evil," in order to be true to the original, should read, "Deliver us from the Evil One." He spoke always as if he fully assented to the popular belief in demoniacal possession. All diseases of the body and of the mind were supposed to be caused by evil spirits. Such was the philosophy of the time, if so it may be called, in regard to the origin of disease.

In regard to all similar cases, just as we speak of *lunatics* and *St. Vitus' dance* solely as designating facts, without meaning that the moon produces insanity or that St. Vitus produces the nervous disease thus designated, so Jesus made use of the popular language of his day, simply as designating familiar

facts. We are not to infer that he believed in the original superstitious ideas which it signified.

It is a sufficient answer to all such questions that they have no relation whatever to the personal character of Jesus. He drew his greatness from no matters of this kind, but from the full, perennial fountain of the love of God and of man, of which, if one drinks, he thirsts no more. This it is that has given him the unrivalled power that he has exercised over the world. The man was far, far greater than the Teacher. "The highest cannot be expressed in words," said Goethe. "The Spirit," Jesus said, "quickeneth, giveth life, the letter killeth." He expressed the Spirit, I repeat, in himself, in his personal character. At the grave of his friend Lazarus, he uttered the immortal saying: "I am the Resurrection and the Life." Whoso believed in him had faith in the life and death of Jesus, in the truth and love of which he is, as no other, our most perfect expression, though he were dead will yet live, and he who lives and believes never dies. A profound saying. The faith of the living believer in Jesus, one with reverence, with adoring love, with the emotions, I repeat, which are God working in man; the same power that Science names Force, makes him conscious of a higher, deeper, more enduring life than the life of his mortal body, and for it he is prepared, if need be, to sacrifice, as Jesus did, the frail,

transitory life of the body. To the living believer, Jesus is the resurrection and the life.

When in our emotions, in reverence, in adoration, instances are seen of this same power that is seen everywhere else,—then will be demonstrated, scientifically proved, made self-evident to every one of any intelligence, the existence of one Supreme Power, our Father in heaven.

How can it possibly be otherwise? In this Universe, where there is an all-pervading adaptation of things to one another, such, for instance, as in the law of gravitation, holding our frail bodies erect, and the swift moving stars of heaven in their courses—how, I say, can it be but that the fact that, for centuries, the personal character of Jesus has been acting, with an ever-increasing, inexhaustible influence, should show that the Power that reigns in and over all is an all-wise, all-loving God! Wherever goes the Cross of Jesus, there go, silently, with our many creeds and rituals, civilization and humanity, light and love and immortal hope. The voice of an angel, ringing round the world, could not declare the existence of a God of infinite goodness more explicitly.

Jesus said, "The time is coming when ye shall worship not in Jerusalem, nor on Mount Gerizim. God is spirit and they that worship Him, worship Him in spirit and in truth." There is a larger truth in these words than is commonly seen in them. They

are repeated from the pulpit as if their meaning were limited to formal worship in church or elsewhere. It is the very nature of what we name Spirit that it is always working, never hasting, never resting. "My Father," said Jesus, "is always working, and I work."

The time is coming, not in the present stage of being, O no! but hereafter, when the Supreme will be worshipped by ceaseless working for God and man without any forms of worship, such as we assemble in churches and cathedrals to observe, with music and solemn words and bended knees and uplifted eyes and hands. By and by in the future, all such forms will be dispensed with. The prayer of Jesus will be fully answered. Man will become so entirely one with God that he will need no formal observances. His life will be in harmony with all the spheres. Far, far off shines the coming of that time, of which the most vivid pictures of golden harps and white-robed angels give us only a faint, far distant idea.

Blessed be God that even now, in this infant stage of our being, we catch a faint echo of the music of heaven, amidst the harsh clashing of creeds and forms, and the roar of the fierce passions of this world! The Cross of Jesus still appeals to the nations. Moved by the blessed spirit of love, women rush to battlefields, and an increasing angelic host ministers to the wounded and the dying. Kings and princes no longer hasten to

make war. They hear the coming footsteps of the power which approaches to rule the world, Public Opinion, and they dare not for any trifling cause declare war. The insanity, the absurdity, of relying on the sword to secure the triumph of equal justice is opening the way for Arbitration, for that harmony among the nations which

BEYOND THE POWER OF SOUND  
FILLS THE UNIVERSE AROUND.

Finally, from all that has been said, we learn that the true religion, as it is in Jesus, consists in fidelity to all our natural relations, as husbands and wives parents and children, members of the community to which we belong, acknowledging all as the sons and daughters of the Most High, members of the household of God, the chosen fellow-laborers of God in humanizing mankind, bringing all men into unity with God and His holiest child, Jesus.

I have treated of the historical claims of the first three Gospels only. The fourth Gospel is not the immediate work of John, but the work of one who received what he relates directly from that Apostle and gave the name of John to the work, because he had received it from John. He narrates faithfully the occasions on which he spoke and acted ; but he takes the liberty of amplifying much that Jesus said in order to give what he understood to be his meaning, as in

the fourteenth chapter and the four succeeding chapters. We cannot tell with any certainty which are the words of Jesus and which the amplifications of the writer. That Jesus compared himself to a vine, is highly probable. It is in keeping with his style of thought. This comparison was made as he was going with his disciples by the vineyards on the Mount of Olives to the garden which he loved.

As in the Synoptics, so in the Fourth Gospel; all that is told of what Jesus said and did on various occasions, bears the same inimitable marks of truth, all-undesignedly on the part of the narrators, showing us what manner of person he was, and giving us reason to glorify him, not only for what he has done and is ever doing for mankind, but for what he was in himself—by far the greatest and best of men, able to move the world as he has done and will forever do.



## SELF-ABNEGATION

“**I** SPEAK not of myself.” Elsewhere Jesus said : “ I do nothing of myself.” And again : “Of myself I do nothing.” These utterances were perfectly natural. We learn from them that, so absolute had become his conviction of the Truth, which is the voice of God in the soul, that he was unable to speak from any other motive than the dictates of his conscience, the voice of God in man. In other words, so commanding was his sense of the Right, that he was incapable, either in word or deed, of being actuated by any selfish considerations.

I can conceive of no higher condition to which a human being can rise. That Jesus was a human being there is no question. To be thus emptied of self and filled full of Truth, the power of God in the soul of man, the Highest and Holiest becoming his central life acting through him just as it is acting everywhere in every atom throughout the Universe.

But what a heaven-wide difference there is between him and us in this respect ! He did nothing of himself. We would fain do everything of ourselves. I do not wonder that he has been believed to be super-human.

He is indeed far, far above us. We are taken up altogether with ourselves, poor, pitiable self-seekers that we are. We can do nothing but for a consideration. What one thing is there that we do without glancing at the appearance it will have in the eyes of others? We can hardly discharge the most ordinary office of humanity, we cannot throw a pittance to a beggar without instantly darting out of ourselves to obtain a good view of the action and see how graceful it looks. Jesus did and said the greatest things as if they were the least, the merest matters of course, just as he walked, just as he breathed. We do the smallest things as if they were the greatest, and showed us to be pattern saints. So prompt and overpowering is this sleepless self-reference, that it seems as if we were never to get rid of it, and nothing better were possible. Indeed, wise men, or they who are reputed wise men and philosophers, have deliberately maintained that self-interest is the grand moving spring of all human activity, of the best as well as of the worst of men, that both and all have regard in all things to themselves first and chiefly. And the religion of the world concedes as much, inculcating goodness, not for its own sake, but for what is coming hereafter, which is better than being good. It would have sin to be shunned, not for the evil it is in itself, but because of the misery with which it is to be punished hereafter.

What a powerful hold this doctrine of selfishness has upon us all! It is our theory and our practice, our philosophy and our religion. It is not indeed preached in so many words for the best of all reasons : there is no need of it. In practice it is illustrated on all sides, recognized as the law, and best possible condition of human nature. The purest character, the most benevolent action, when carefully analyzed, will, it is believed, be reduced to these dregs.

Now what I have first to say is this : If it be so, if this devil is so firmly lodged in the human heart that Almighty God Himself cannot dispossess it, if nothing better is possible for us, then I cannot help thinking that in this world of things so perfectly fitted one to another, we should have been so made that we could not have imagined anything better, and would have been content to be just what we are.

But the fact is, we can easily conceive of ourselves as doing good to others and doing it constantly, thinking only of them, never dreaming of any return, hankering for no compensation, no praise, willing to be unacknowledged, misunderstood, studying all the time how we may benefit, not ourselves, but those around us, ready to surrender pleasure and ease, to bless our fellow men. I say we surely can conceive of such a thing. We can represent to ourselves a man whom no ingratitude disheartens or embitters, who loses all thought of self in a loving continuance in generous doing, hav-

ing done with self forever, delivered heart and soul from the body of this death. I read a long time ago of an old man in some city of France, I believe it was, who lived and died with the reputation of a miser. He had subsisted upon the cheapest food. He went dressed in the shabbiest clothes. After his death, his will was found, and it was to the effect, that, having seen how the poor of his native city suffered for want of pure water he had devoted his life to the accumulation of a large sum of money which he bequeathed to the city for the erection of waterworks. Thus, while the world was daily pouring contempt and ridicule upon him, he was lost to it all in a vision of pure, fresh water for the poor, for those who were sneering at him, and hooting at him on the street.

Not only can such conduct be conceived of, it makes us feel small in comparison. It humbles us, and we feel mean at the contrast of such a picture with ourselves. We are uncomfortable because we do not realize in ourselves the generosity we cannot but admire.

It is true, so rooted and grounded are we in our self-love, that we soon get rid of any such uneasy feelings. We can always work ourselves into a comfortable idea of our own worth. It never takes much pains to keep ourselves in our own good graces. We have only to look at ourselves through the eyes of those who love us, and see ourselves in the amiable light in which we appear to their kind hearts. But,

with all our self-flatteries, our good opinion of ourselves now and then gets a sudden blow. Blinded though we are by our self-conceit, we come occasionally face to face, full front, with the ugly truth, and we are forced to see, that with all the fine show we are making, we are on the watch to make capital out of our good deeds, and are fondly hoping that even the good that we have done "by stealth may be found out by accident." Thus at times, the true state of things is forced upon our notice, and we have to confess that, instead of the commendation we claim, we are objects of pity and condemnation. So we are made to learn that there is nothing so offensive as good deeds, all slimy and spoiled by spiritual pride. The odor strikes our senses, the corruption of selfishness at the root of our motives is laid bare, and no veil that our self-love can weave is thick enough to hide it from our view.

I cannot believe that this would be the case, I cannot believe that we should be thus put to shame, that selfishness would be so hateful, were it not that we are capable of rising above it. It cannot be that man cannot do anything in this generous Universe unless he has the prospect of being paid for it, cannot move a finger without full security beforehand. Were it so, then would this world be a market-place full of chafing traders, forever trying to overreach one another, and not the decorated mansion of the good God that it is. Believe no such thing, dear friends, though all

the world by precept and example incessantly ring it in your ears, and though you yourself be defeated in the battle with self over and over again.

So far from this degrading doctrine being true, so far from its being impossible to forget ourselves and be filled with the love of God, most sacredly do I believe, and most earnestly would I teach, that every soul of flesh is expressly made by nature to become possessed of God, to be the abiding dwelling-place of the Divine Spirit of Love just as Jesus was.

Yes, we are bound to learn to do nothing of ourselves. God must be all in all, and emphatically all in us, the strength of our will and the life of our affections.

But are we to have no concern for self? Is there not a desire of happiness that springs eternal in the human heart? Does not the nature God has given us prompt us to consult our own happiness? Unquestionably. If a man has no desire for that, he has no inducement to live.

But what is this happiness that we all desire? Is it anything apart from, and independent of, the activity of those instinctive affections of which our nature is composed?

Now not one of these affections, these appetites, bodily, intellectual, spiritual, has Self for its aim and object. They all help Self. From the highest to the lowest they all discharge selfish offices. But they all crave things out of ourselves.

Physical hunger, for example, has not self for its end and aim. If not restrained, it will injure and destroy self. When we are in health, we do not desire food because it nourishes us ; it nourishes us because we desire it. And this desire springs up before we know anything about what will be the consequence of taking food. With this consequence our agency has nothing to do. It is not by any engineering of ours that the unseen process of digestion goes on.

We have a vague idea of happiness, as a sort of easy-chair comfort, and do not clearly perceive that happiness is not possible save in the activity of those affections which, as I say, all seek their objects out of ourselves.

And while our physical desires need to be governed lest they harm and ruin self, our thirst for the Highest and Best must not be denied. We cannot love God too well. "Blessed they who hunger, and thirst for Righteousness, for they will be full, they will be content."

When we attend to what may be observed in ourselves and in others, we discover that nothing is more sure to mar our enjoyment of any interesting scene than to have our attention distracted from it by thinking of ourselves. The first visit to Niagara is always disappointing because we approach it, expecting the raptures it is to throw us into. Were we suddenly transported in our sleep to the foot of the grand spectacle, we should realize the full effect of it, and be lost in wonder and awe.

So is it in everything. He who is thinking of his health with every morsel he puts into his mouth, is a sick man. Engrossed with himself, he cannot relish his food. "A man may boast that his system is in high order," it has been said, "but the healthy man is he who, for his part, does not know that he has any system." Here, I suppose, we come upon the reason why physicians send their patients abroad. It is with the hope that they will leave themselves at home. The perfection of bodily felicity has been pronounced to be unconsciousness of a stomach.

Such is the case, not only in these common matters, but in the highest and most vital concerns. It is just as true in regard to the health of the soul. The welfare of the soul, the greatest happiness, which death itself cannot disturb, must needs be of supreme interest. It may well cause the most anxious hopes and fears. Nevertheless, the peace profound and imperturbable is not possible until hope and fear are lost, swallowed up in an all-commanding hunger for the Good. This vital truth is hardly put too strongly in the old orthodox saying: "No man can be saved who is not willing to be damned for the glory of God." When making no stipulation for ourselves, we are inspired with a boundless enthusiasm for the Right;—then it is that God is breathing through us, not annihilating our personality, but deepening our sense of it. They who have had this rare experience, who have entered into



this heaven, the highest condition of the soul, have borne witness that it is so. The sacred passion which possessed them to the exclusion of all thought of self, they profoundly felt was theirs as nothing else on earth was. And yet it was no creation of theirs. They did not command it. It commanded them. No man ever lived who uttered the first personal pronoun with a fuller consciousness of his own personality than Jesus, and yet he said that of himself he could do nothing. It was the Father who said and did all. And so Paul: "Not I, but the grace of God within me." Such is the transcendent mystery of our nature, the identity of man with God. Emerson said of the true artist, "himself from God he could not free." The same may be said of man universally: himself from God man cannot free.

We can love nothing on earth so fervently as the Highest and Best. Everything below that, everything imperfect, when once we discover its imperfection, ceases to satisfy us. What though we can form no image in our minds of the Supreme, He is never far from us, revealing His perfection in every sphere of life, at every turn, in the meanest employments. An ideal perfection hovers over the work-bench of the humblest artisan. Amid dreams of money to be made and reputation to be won comes the vision of manufacturing the article, be it the homeliest household utensil, not for profit nor fame only, but for itself, to make

it show the grace and beauty which the handiwork of Nature, of God, reveals. When this aim so commands a man that he would rather starve than fail to do his best, God is revealing Himself to that man, then and there in his workshop. The love of God, the soul of religion is stirring within him. Then he is conscious of a Higher than he, working in him, and of his own self he can do nothing.

It is the secret of life : self-renunciation, a constant and imperative necessity. I am not insisting on anything exaggerated, over-strained. Neither am I expressing any private opinion, but stating a fact, an irreversible condition of our being, not any new fact either.

It is needed, self-renunciation everywhere and at all times ; not only on great occasions, when great self-sacrifices must be made, but in the dullest times, in our common daily life, in company, among our kindred and friends. There is no sphere of life when it is not required.

What is there so destructive of domestic peace as the worship of personal ease? When we think of our thousands of commodious dwellings, heaped with luxuries such as kings and queens in times not far behind us never dreamed of, we should suppose that their inmates have nothing to do but to be happy in a ceaseless interchange of kind offices. But instead of this pleasant spectacle, how often are there, if not loud-

voiced wranglings, sullen looks and tears shed in silence, and golden days and years running thus to wretched waste. It is not that there is no love there. It is not that the members of family circles, like bells thus jangled and discordant, are unwilling to serve one another. What one has is readily put at the disposal of the rest. Where then is the trouble? The trouble is that one and all make too much account of themselves. They stand jealously upon being considered. Their self-love is so tender that the least appearance of being slighted brings tears. It can bear no wholesome reproof unless sugared all over, and preceded and followed by the sweetest flatteries. Are there not persons who will work without stint to serve a friend, and yet who are as quick as lightning to stand upon their dignity, ruffling up at the merest fancy of offence, not willing to be appeased, parting reluctantly with the suspicion of an intended insult or injury? There are those who will serve a friend to the last drop of their blood; but then they must be paid for it, not in money, not in gifts, O no! but in recognition of their services, in being made much of, in ample proof that they are never forgotten.

O friends, we must be above all this. There is a temper so single-minded, that it does not so much as whisper to itself the faintest hint of compensation, overpaid in full measure by the happiness which it is its life and delight to promote. There is a habit of

mind, so free from every bias of self-consciousness that it can hardly fancy a neglect, or, if neglect is palpable, there is no sullenness, no saying, "Only think, that I, I of all persons, should be treated so, and by those for whom I have done and suffered so much." It never thus leaks out that a secret account has been kept all the time of kindnesses rendered, to the minutest item. This true love delights in the saying, "If I love you, what is that to you? Go to—I have better reasons for loving you than your love of me." It minds that other saying,

"SEEK LOVE, AND IT WILL SHUN YOU,  
HASTE AWAY; IT WILL OUTFRAN YOU."

As there is no place in which a self-forgetting spirit is more needed than in the circle of the nearest and dearest, there is no sphere that offers more abundant opportunities for its cultivation. There the intercourse is so intimate and constant, our sharp corners are brought out so closely together that the temper is exposed to continual surprises. Every incident is a touchstone. Nothing but this fine spirit will make home-life as smooth as it is intimate. We must keep no account with our friends, but give them unlimited credit. Let them draw upon our good will without limit. Honor all their demands. "Love your enemies" is a great precept. I sometimes think that "Love your friends" is no less.

When we see how necessary it is in our homes to do nothing of ourselves and think, moreover, that this self-abjuring temper is the very highest thing to which we can attain, that it is the spirit of Jesus himself, that it is God within us, is it not a wonder how fond some people are of running away from their homes, to religious meetings and services, how they crave rites and ceremonials as if there were no religious life save in these? Dear friends, we have special means of grace amidst our domestic cares and natural relations. Every hour comes loaded with them, to aid us to obtain salvation from Self. To use them is the surest sign of personal religion, the brightest ornament of Christian character, the crowning fact in the development of the religious sense. It is the last great victory in the battle of life.

Everywhere and in all things it is the one thing needful. So long as in any business, high or low, we seek first our own aggrandizement, life is a failure, all appearances to the contrary notwithstanding. We first begin to breathe, we are first born when we catch a glimpse of self-renunciation. Then our life, instead of shrivelling up in this microscopic organism, the body, as it needs must, takes in others, all mankind. It takes God into itself. Until then our life only flickers, now flashing up in selfish hopes, now well-nigh quenched in selfish fears. We may flatter ourselves all the while that we still have live hearts in our bosoms

because we can weep with our friends when they weep. This is indeed a symptom of life, but it is an easy thing, especially if it be true as may sometimes be feared, that there is something in the misfortunes of our friends that gives us a secret satisfaction. But to rejoice with them when they rejoice, in this country especially, where social ambition is at a white heat, ah! there's the rub! The success of our friends fills us with envy and makes us ill-natured. As others pass us in this selfish rivalry, we console ourselves by flinging after them ridicule and censorious judgments. We grow sour and bitter, and can live only by disparaging others. Where self is the idol there is no end to meannesses and heartburnings. Is not the world full of these things? Full of ill-will and all sorts of uncharitableness, simmering under the polite formalities which we would fain make serve in place of the true spirit, and breaking out especially upon the division of estates, among the nearest of kin into life-long alienations and feuds.

And the worst of it all is that all faith in man and in God goes to ruin. We come to believe that nothing better is to be looked for, that all men seek their own, that human nature is selfish in the grain, and self-interest reigns forever and ever, and an Almighty God of Love is a dream. Have we made up our minds to come to this? Is the idea of disinterestedness only the romance of youth? Happy then are

they who die early before they know what a world they have come into !

But it is not so. I cannot believe that I have nothing better to live for than my own poor, little self, nothing more inspiring than my own petty interests. There is something infinitely more captivating. That there is, needs no saint to tell us. The worst of men—men whose names are written in history in blood—have borne witness to the ravishing charm of things immeasurably above ourselves. “Let my name be blasted,” exclaimed Danton, one of the so-called monsters of the first French Revolution, “let my name be blasted, but let my country be free.” His case is no singular one. Thousands in every age, in every country, have leaped to sacrifice their lives for their native lands. It is this sacred cause that has once and again baptized this soil in blood.

But there are higher, far higher things, still more life-giving : the cause of universal freedom, the divine ideas of the Infinite and the Everlasting, the sublimity of God and Immortality, the divine humanity of the Man of Nazareth, the sovereignty of Justice, the beauty of Holiness, the nobleness of Self-sacrifice. These are things shining in the firmament of thought high above us. Let us once catch a vision of these, and in their fervent heat all self-concern shall vanish and the imperishable soul in this mortal flesh shall stir with a new life. No longer shall we waste a

thought upon ourselves, no longer be ready to strike for our wages, but hold ourselves only too bountifully rewarded when by an utter self-sacrifice we may catch and reflect a faint ray of the upper glory. "Spirits of bliss and greatness who are above us," exclaims one, "when man here below, amid life's poor vapors, throws away his happiness because he deems it of less value than the Right, then does he become great and blessed like you. In truth, we all need a holier earth because the contemplation of self-sacrifice always elevates and never depresses us, and because the warmest tears that drop from human eyes flow not from pity nor suffering, but from the holiest love and joy."



## THE RESURRECTION OF JESUS

MY aim in this Discourse is to show how entirely without design the Accounts of the Resurrection of Jesus, which Easter commemorates, are harmonized by the supposition that he actually re-appeared alive. Adopting this as a simple hypothesis, and reading these Accounts, resorting to no forced nor far-fetched considerations, but by the light of our common knowledge of human nature, I propose :

First, to relate the incidents contained in the Four Gospels, as they would appear to a spectator standing apart at a point of view commanding the sepulchre and its immediate neighborhood.

And then to show that all is in perfect harmony with Truth and Nature.

It has often been suggested that Jesus was not really dead, when his body was laid in the sepulchre. That he was dead when it was taken from the Cross is proved by a circumstance mentioned in the Fourth Gospel, which evidently surprised those who witnessed it, as the mention of it is accompanied by an emphatic asseveration of its truth.\* It is stated

---

\* John xix, 35.

that when the body of Jesus was pierced by the spear of the Roman soldier to make sure that he was dead, "forthwith came thereout blood and water." My attention was called some time ago by a medical friend to an article in a Medical Journal, in which it is stated that in a person who has suffered great agony just before dying, the pericardium, in which the heart is enclosed, is often found to be full of water. When, therefore, the spear was plunged into the body of Jesus, it must have penetrated the pericardium and pierced the heart. Remember the agony of Jesus in the garden, which was so severe that the sweat fell from him like big, heavy drops of blood, and which was shortly followed by the terrible agony of Crucifixion. The water accumulates gradually before it stops the beating of the heart.

I invite you now, dear friends, to transport yourselves in imagination to the garden and to the neighborhood of the sepulchre in which lies the body of Jesus, and which is closed by a large, heavy stone.

Your attention is first arrested by a number of Roman soldiers, standing or lying at a short distance from the tomb. Suddenly the stone tumbles from its place, and thereupon a figure all in white appears, seated on the stone. At the sight the soldiers run away. The figure shortly disappears. Then a little company of women are seen and heard approaching. We hear

them asking one another how they shall get the stone moved away from the tomb. As they go nearer to it, they see that the stone is already removed, the tomb open. One of them turns, and hastens back. The other women go into the sepulchre, but soon come out and flee from the spot. After an interval, the one who had run away at the sight of the open tomb, is seen coming back with two men who go into the tomb, but soon come out and depart, leaving the woman weeping at the tomb. She stoops and looks down into it. At the same instant a voice is heard asking her why she wept. The question is hardly asked her before it is repeated, and she turns round evidently hearing a person whom you see coming behind her who asks her the same question adding another: "Whom is she seeking?" She glances at the speaker and answers that some one had carried off the body of her Master, and begs him to tell her where it is. His answer is only one word, her own name, "Mary." She starts, she gazes at him for an instant, and flings herself at his feet, exclaiming, "Master!" and clinging to him as if she would never let him go. He tells her that he had not yet left the world, and bids her go and tell his disciples that he was about to go to his Father and their Father, to his God and their God.

Having thus set before you, as in a succession of

pictures, what occurred, as it would appear to an on-looker, on that memorable morning in the garden, at the sepulchre in which the body of Jesus had been laid, and reading the story by the light of what we all know of human nature, I proceed to show that all is harmonized by the supposition that Jesus was there, alive, not recognized at the first, and that, when recognized, it was under circumstances which gave no opportunity for the delusive play of the imagination.

Only keep in mind, I pray you, on what a tumultuous flood of emotions, of wonder, of fear, of joy, the minds of the various persons present at the sepulchre were tossed. It would have been strange indeed, not at all natural, had they all told the same story precisely in the way in which it happened.

The sepulchre was a dark cavern, cut out of the rock, and in the dim light of the early dawn, lighted only through the opened entrance. Objects in it could be seen only partially. Jesus awoke from the mysterious sleep of death. Throwing off the white cloth that had been wrapped around his head and leaving it where his head had lain, he groped his way to the entrance, guided by the faint light that penetrated the cracks and crevices made by the rough, unhewn stone that closed the sepulchre. The stone could be more easily pushed away from within than pulled away from without. I have seen it

stated in a Scientific Journal—though I do not know that we need the authority of science for a fact that we are all familiar with—that quite a slight concussion of the earth will jar it to a considerable distance. The soldiers on guard were startled by the jar caused by the fall of the stone; some of them probably were half asleep. They had been on watch all night. Engaged as they were, not in any familiar military duty, but in guarding a tomb—the tomb moreover of a man widely believed to be possessed of superhuman power—brave enough as they doubtless were in battle, they were none the less full of superstitious fears, especially when confronted with circumstances so startling. The jarring of the earth they at once took for an earthquake; their terror magnified it into a great earthquake, and to their imaginations the strange figure seated on the stone—which was no other than Jesus, wrapped in the grave-clothes, who sat there to breathe the fresh air and recover from the exertion of pushing away the stone—appeared to them of unearthly whiteness, and its eyes shone like lightning. “Objects imperfectly seen, to eyes dilated by terror, take form from the imagination.” The soldiers, it is said, “became as dead men,” or, as we should say, were frightened to death. They fled in their fright to the Jewish Priests, and told them of the earthquake and of the fearful figure they had seen. They did not say that they saw anyone go into the tomb or come out

of it. The Priests, seeing how terror-stricken the men were, could have but one thought: that a trick had been played on them to frighten them away. The Priests bribed the men to tell the story so. Strauss, in his "Life of Jesus," says it is incredible that the Sanhedrim, some seventy in number, could all have agreed to bribe the soldiers to tell a lie. But it was not a lie, it was what the Priests themselves not unnaturally believed to be the truth that they induced the soldiers to tell. They assured them, moreover, they should not be punished for deserting their post, as they, the Priests, would make no complaint of them. The soldiers had been borrowed of the Roman Governor and were amenable only to the Priests, who were ready to exonerate them.

The next thing to be considered is: Who was the young man in a long white garment, whom the women, to their great surprise, found in the tomb, and before whom, when he told them that Jesus had risen, they bowed down to the earth, holding him to be an angel from heaven? He made no claim to that character. Who else could it be but Jesus himself, who had retreated into the tomb upon the approach of the women? Unprepared at that moment to make himself known, he bade the women to go quickly and tell his disciples *and Peter* that he had risen. This mention of Peter betrays Jesus. Who else on earth but Jesus could have shown such greatness of mind!

Only he who gasped out a prayer of forgiveness for the barbarous and ignorant executioners who were nailing him to the Cross,—only he could have had the unrivalled magnanimity to bear in mind how utterly unprepared Peter was for the terrible trial to which he had been put,—only he could have taken the first opportunity to assure his wretched disciple that what had passed was not remembered against him. The women obeyed the bidding of the supposed angel and rushed off to tell the disciples what they had seen and heard. There is yet another incident going to prove that it was Jesus whom the women had seen without recognizing,—I will mention it by and by. The women reported that they had seen two angels. Whence the second angel? It was the white cloth which Jesus had left where his head had lain. They caught sight of it in the dim light of the tomb and, in the wild excitement of their minds, took it for another angel. After the women had gone, Jesus, having found other clothes, left “the long white garment” in the sepulchre and withdrew from the immediate vicinity.

Then came Peter and John and Mary with no idea that Jesus had risen, but only to ascertain whether Mary’s report that the body of Jesus had been taken away was true. John, being the younger, reached the tomb first, and waited for Peter to come up. The mention of this slight circumstance, by the way, must have come from John himself, upon whose

memory the least incident of that eventful hour was indelibly impressed. When Peter came, they both went together into the tomb and found that Mary's report was true,—the body was not there. What perplexed them was that the grave-clothes were all there. They could not conceive why the grave-clothes had not been carried off with the body. They came out and went away, saying nothing to Mary. Their silence told her as plainly as any words that it was even so : the body had disappeared. They left her weeping at the tomb.

As she stood there, she stooped and looked into the sepulchre. She caught sight of two white objects. Seeing them only in the dim light of the place, she could not have seen that they were the grave-clothes, as she supposed the grave-clothes must have been carried off with the body. It had been a surprise to Peter and John that the grave-clothes had not gone with the body. She knew not what to make of those white things. At the same instant that she saw them, a voice came asking her why she wept; she answered it, and was aware of some one coming behind her who repeated the same question, adding another : Whom was she seeking ? By this added query it is evident that he had put to her the first question and had not heard her answer as her back was turned to him. She turned round and found herself face to face with a man whom she supposed to be the gardener. All



this happened coincidently in far less time than it takes to tell it. Glancing at the supposed gardener through her streaming eyes, she begged him to tell her where the body of Jesus was. In reply he simply breathed her name: "Mary!" That voice, which had so often called her by that familiar name, flashed a thrill of emotion through her whole frame. Gazing at him with a mingled look of unutterable wonder and rapture, she threw herself at his feet, exclaiming, "Master!" She clung to him as to her life. He told her he had not yet left the world, and bade her not stop but go and tell his disciples that he was going to his Father and their Father, to his God and their God.

It has been thought that Mary was the dupe of her imagination. The French biographer of Jesus pronounces her the victim of an hallucination. There was nothing whatever about the person before her to set her imagination at work. His garb was of the homeliest. She had at the moment but one thought: that her revered Master was dead, as her tears bear witness.

She said, afterwards, that she saw two angels in the tomb. But it is evident, on the very face of her story, that she had not the least idea, when she looked into the tomb, that the white things she saw there were angelic beings. Her attention was immediately diverted from them. She turned her back

upon them to talk with a common man, as he appeared to her to be, a gardener. Never, never, would she have done so—she would have been awe-struck, riveted to the spot,—had she believed those white objects were angels. When she returned to the disciples and learned that the other women had seen two angels in the tomb, I can almost hear her exclaim : “ I saw those two angels, too ! I did not know what to make of them at the moment ; and that voice that asked me why I wept—coming, I knew not whence—must have come from one of them.” Thus it was that Mary always believed and declared that she had seen two angels in the sepulchre. Perhaps she was the more confident in this assertion, in that she may have been unwilling to acknowledge that her companions had seen more than she saw. Certain it is that Mary saw two white objects in the tomb. The women also saw two, but one of the two that the women saw was the young man clad in white, whom Mary did not see. Yet she declared she saw two. How did this happen ?

The fact is, that after the women left and before Mary came, Jesus, having found other clothing, left in the tomb the long, white garment in which he was wrapped when the women saw him, and that it was which Mary saw, as well as the white head cloth. It is such little incidents as these, wholly undesigned, that are so telling as circumstantial evidences of truth.

All who assisted at the burial of Jesus were Jews, very strict as to ceremonial uncleanness, one or more of them—most probably the gardner—had worn garments which, becoming unclean from contact with a dead body, were left near the sepulchre, and it was these garments that Jesus found.

The discrepancies in the accounts of the Resurrection are not inconsistent with the truth of it. For instance, the first Gospel gives us the impression that the soldiers and the women were all present at the sepulchre at the same time. What could be more natural than that, in the intense excitement of the hour, the witnesses of what had occurred should, in telling their different stories, represent in hurried accents the wonderful things that happened without any regard to the order of time?

Again, it is stated that all the women who went out to the tomb saw Jesus and held him by his feet, whereas it was only Mary who held him by his feet. As they had all gone together, Mary and the rest, to the tomb, and as the women rushed back to the disciples, declaring they had seen angels who told them that Jesus had risen, and were quickly followed by Mary, exclaiming that she had seen Jesus himself, that it was no spectre, as was suggested, but his very self in flesh and blood, for she had held him by his feet—is it any wonder that in the excitement and confusion of the moment—all exclaiming and talking

together—is it any wonder that the two stories got mixed, and that the impression was received that all the women had held Jesus by his feet? Great stress must have been laid upon his having been actually held by his feet—a decisive proof that it was no phantom which had been seen.

There are accounts of other subsequent Re-appearances of Jesus. I do not find these accounts stamped by such numerous and striking internal evidences of truth as his first appearance to Mary. But the first appearance being true, a strong presumption is created of the truth of his subsequent Re-appearances. Ghostly apparitions, of which we have numberless reports, occur mostly in the deep hours of the night and each apparition is seen only by one person. The Re-appearances of Jesus are related to have occurred in broad daylight, and some of them were witnessed by two or three or more of his disciples, and the last by more than five hundred persons.

In the Book of Acts it is stated that some thousands openly professed to be the followers of Christ, and united with his immediate disciples. These had become so by the direct influence of Jesus himself. They had heard his words of wisdom and love. They had witnessed his wonderful works. They did not call themselves Christians. That was not a name that they took. It was the name which was first

given in derision to the followers of Christ years after his death, at Antioch, because they had so much to tell about Christ and his name was forever on their lips. In those early days nothing worse could have been said of a man than to call him a Christian.

After all, so strange, so extraordinary is the Resurrection of a dead man to life, that doubtless, notwithstanding all that can be said in proof of the Reappearance of Jesus, it tasks the faith of numbers to accept it as a fact. And indeed it cannot be admitted, unless it be found to be in accordance with the inviolable Divine order of the Universe.

The Resurrection was, I believe, in perfect conformity with a Law—the very highest of Nature. There is a Power working all around us and within us, infinitely greater than blind, mechanical force, the power of Spirit, of Mind, of Faith over the flesh. Jesus was moved by Faith in this Supreme Spirit, and by Love of it, to return to his heart-broken disciples, to re-inforce their trust in him, and to make them the fearless heralds, which they became, of the truth, for which he had lived and voluntarily suffered a terrible death, the truth, which kindles into action those instincts of the soul; the hunger and thirst for wisdom and perfection that attest the life of the Eternal God in man. It was in this faith that he said that whosoever lives and believes, never dies.

Yes, friends, O yes, there is that in every human

soul, which, though buried deep in most under the animal nature, craves knowledge for itself, and which whatever is found to be imperfect can never content, and which death cannot touch. It is these divine instincts that are never exhausted, but grow stronger in those who are the most conscious of them the more they are gratified, which need Immensity and Eternity for their full development. The Universe might well exist, and go on revolving forever in consummate order, had such a being as man never appeared. But man could not exist and reach his full height here or hereafter without this immeasurable Creation to awaken his wonder, his curiosity, his longing TO KNOW and TO BECOME.

Already in this fleeting infancy of his being, the law that guides the sun and the moon, and the myriads of stars in their courses has been discovered, and Science, busily searching into the origin of things, is learning the way in which the All-animating Spirit is working to produce higher and still higher forms of being.

But alas ! Science, not discerning the highest law of Nature, the power of Spirit, so fully revealed in the Life, Death and Resurrection of the great Saviour of the world, has so possessed us all with a mechanical theory of Creation, that we see nothing in the heavens above nor in the earth beneath but blind forces; and such materialistic modes of thought have become so preva-

lent that we are rendered well nigh incapable of comprehending the faith of Jesus, by the power of which he was able to stand alone against a world in arms, and re-animate his mortal body.

Could we only appreciate that transcendent faith of his in God, and in God present in man as He is present in all things else,—could we only realize to ourselves, how, in the last scene of his life, in the great crisis of his fate, he stood there—with savage bigotry yelling for his blood—as calm and silent as the heavens above him,—could we only realize that scene, so far from doubting whether he rose from the dead, we should rather wonder had he not risen, full as he was of the power of God, to comfort his disciples, plunged as they were in despair, and inspire them with courage to confront, as he had done, the worst that men could do to them.

Finally, if the consequences of any reported extraordinary event can afford, in the absence of direct proof of it, any ground for believing it, surely such a reason is furnished us for believing the Resurrection of Jesus. It is an unquestionable historical fact that it was their faith in his having re-appeared that emboldened his Apostles, in the face of the bloodiest persecution, to publish his name throughout the world. His Resurrection was to them the one essential thing. If that was not true, all else went for nothing. Was the faith that had such effects a delusion? Then

“The pillared firmament is rottenness,  
And earth's base built on stubble.”

To my mind no idea can be more monstrous. And through the Apostles, what vast and enduring consequences have resulted, consequences that for twenty centuries have determined the history of nations!

And now all denominations, however much they may magnify their differences, their creeds and rituals, are all at heart ONE. All acknowledge the one Religion, the Spirit of a broad, active Humanity, of which the character of the Lord Jesus is our greatest Revelation. That Spirit, breathing from his Life and his Cross and through all the humane institutions that accompany Christianity wherever it spreads—that Spirit it is which appeals to the universal human heart and is humanizing the world. Be it our aim to cherish this blessed spirit, to live not unto ourselves, but for Love's sake and for all the beneficent offices of Humanity. So only can we become one with Christ, one with God.



## GOD IS LOVE

I JOHN IV. 8

WHEN we reflect, dear friends, are we not struck by the fact that all denominations of Christians, Catholics, and Protestants of every name—all agree in taking it for granted as a truth beyond question that a man claiming to be sent and inspired by God must prove his divine mission by working miracles, that is, by showing himself empowered to suspend the laws of nature?

What are the laws of nature but the laws of God, the ways in which God works? Is it not evident, therefore, upon further reflection that it cannot be by departing from the ways of God that a man proves his divine authority, but by revealing them and conforming to them in all things?

In studying the accounts of Jesus that have come down to us, I have discovered, to my own delighted surprise, how blind we have all been, what a palpable error it is to regard the extraordinary works that he wrought as suspensions of the laws of nature. They are directly the reverse: instances, illustrations of a law, nay of the highest law of nature, of the power of

Mind over matter, of the Spirit over the flesh. For this representation of the so-called miracles, there is the highest authority, the express authority of Jesus himself.

It is true, he ascribed his extraordinary works directly to God. But in the same breath he declared with equal explicitness that they were wrought, not by any preternatural power which he alone possessed, but by Faith : a universal constituent of human nature ; thus basing his authority as a messenger of God not upon any departure from the laws of nature, but upon the power of the very highest law of nature.

Is it not strange indeed that it should ever have been thought that in all this vast and varied Universe, in which the most lavish provision is made for this mortal life of ours, no provision exists for the safety of the immortal soul, that to save the soul from utter perdition it was necessary to break through the established Order of things and suspend the laws by which it is maintained.

The unhappy consequence of this widely accepted error concerning the remarkable things done by Christ is that it has put in opposition to each other, to the serious injury of both, two things which are bound to be forever most intimately united : Knowledge, Science on the one hand, and Religion on the other.

The disastrous effect upon Religion is that separating it as preternatural, as apart from the order of nature,

it has desecrated all Nature. All history, outside of the history of the Christian Church, is termed profane. Natural reason is denounced as a false guide not to be depended on. Men of science, and all well-informed people who meditate on the works of God, find that the Universe is governed by inviolable laws; consequently they are slow to believe in miracles, especially when the report of such violations of law come to us from far-off and semi-barbarous ages. Is it any wonder therefore,—are intelligent and thoughtful men to be blamed, when the extraordinary events related in the primitive records of our Religion are declared by the whole Christian world to be miracles,—are they to be condemned, I say, for regarding the Gospels as made up of legends and fables? Thus it is that unbelief comes, and indifference to Religion, and scepticism, and with scepticism, pessimism, questioning whether life be worth the living; and Religion is left to women and children. Thus Christianity suffers greatly from being represented as having a miraculous origin.

Science, on the other hand, ignorant of the revelation in the history of Christ of the highest law of nature, namely, of the supremacy of Mind over Matter, sees only blind mechanical and chemical forces everywhere at work, and regards Creation as a mere machine. Thus it is that materialistic modes of thought have become prevalent, Science recognizing not the highest law of Nature, of God.

Having long and earnestly sought to ascertain by the internal evidence of the Gospels, what they really are, and having found them "wrought all over and inlaid" with undesigned signatures of truth and nature, I hope now to offer you such a view of the Religion of Christ as taught by him, and illustrated in his own personal character, as will carry conviction to the reason and conscience of every one of you. A thing so necessary to the well-being, to the very life of man, as Religion must be as self-evident as the light and the air. It cannot be the abstruse thing it has so long been represented to be.

It may seem that I have forgotten my text, but what I have been saying is introductory to it. I have endeavored to clear away all notions of the preternatural character of the works and nature of Christ that we may take at the outset the right point of view, and proceed upon the presumption that Christianity in all that it teaches, in all that is contained in its primitive records, is altogether natural, of all things indeed the most natural, since it reveals in the life of Christ the highest law of Nature.

I return to the three brief words with which I began :

GOD IS LOVE.

Give me, friends, your earnest, patient attention. If there be any fact in the world around us, or in the world within us, which admits of being demonstrated

beyond all question, it is this brief text. As surely as we exist, so surely God is Love.

I would to Heaven I may be able to do justice to this truth of truths, and deepen in your minds and in myself a conviction of it so strong that nothing can befall us, no suffering, no bereavement, that shall ever again be able to disturb it.

In the first place, mark the relation of man to the external world. Hearken to a brief description of it by one of the most eminent men of this century. "The situation of man on the globe he inhabits," says Sir John Herschel, "is in many respects exceedingly "remarkable. Compared with its other denizens, he "seems in his physical condition in almost every respect their inferior, and equally unprovided for the "supply of his natural wants and for his defence "against the innumerable enemies which surround "him. No other animal passes so large a portion of "its existence in a state of absolute helplessness, or "falls in old age into such protracted imbecility. To "no other warm-blooded animal has Nature denied "that indispensable covering, without which the vicissitudes of a temperate, and the rigors of a cold "climate are equally insupportable. Yet," so concludes the distinguished philosopher, "yet man is the "undisputed lord of the Creation."

Striking as this is, it is not the first time it has been said. It was written long ago in the book of

Psalms that to man God has given dominion over the works of His hand. We need no testimony to this fact more decisive than is afforded by the present century, in which man has subdued the lightnings of heaven to his daily service, and converted the wild ocean into his swift and obedient messenger.

Now consider further, I pray you, how it stirs the inmost soul of us all, when we hear of men risking, nay, sacrificing their lives for others, strangers perhaps, for pure humanity's sake. The sight or bare report of such things thrills the universal heart of the world. However depraved and hardened men may be, when tidings of these self-sacrifices come to them they are helpless to resist the charm. They bow down in admiration and reverence. Thus, as man lords it over the whole Creation, Love lords it over man. Reversing the text, I am prompted to exclaim: Love, Love is God, over-ruling the whole Creation!

But what do I mean by calling Love, God? Is Love then a person? Is it not impersonal, an affection of the mind? Ah! friends, no articulation of the human voice can begin to tell what the brief word, God, is used to signify. If we mean by it that God is a person, the idea of sex is involved, and our language is anthropomorphic, we make God in the image of man. If we speak of the Supreme impersonally, we deny him intelligence, and the Highest and Best is reduced to a blind force. As, however, we must speak

of Him, we must use language under protest, never forgetful of its utter inadequacy. The essential being of the most High is absolutely Incomprehensible. Who by searching can find out God? That Love is an attribute of the Supreme we know since it rules over man, the lord of Creation.

Happy, unspeakably happy is it for man that he is subject to this divine power, that, when he witnesses instances of it, prompting men to generous self-sacrifices, he instantly becomes conscious of wonder, admiration, veneration, love. These familiar sentiments we call ours. And they are ours as nothing else is ours. They are identified with our inmost consciousness. They deepen our sense of being. But we do not create them. We cannot venerate and love at our pleasure. They are the pure inspirations of our Creator. They are the power of God present in us, as it is present in all Nature. Jesus was thus conscious of God within him as no other ever has been. "I speak not of myself," he said, "it is the Father who speaks and works in me." It was in his own human consciousness that he recognized God within him.

Although we cannot know God in His essence, His ways of working, the modes of His operations,—these we see. In them we have revelations of His Spirit. They show us that He observes an inviolable order, that He delights in harmony, in beauty, and in an endless variety. We see also, and it attests His In-

finite Intelligence, that every atom that exists is made serviceable to an infinitude of purposes.

The most striking instance by far in the history of mankind of the power of Love over man, the lord of Creation, is manifest in him, in whose name we gather in this place. The supreme love of God and of man which inspired him, has moved and is still moving the world with unequalled power, imperceptibly, as all true things grow, but steadily breathing into the hearts of men an ever-widening humanity. Crude theologies, the inventions of the human imagination, have gathered thickly around him, and well nigh hidden him from sight.

There is one thing, however, that no mists of time, no clouds of human error could hide, so bright is it with the light of Love, and that thing is the one event which crowned his brief career: his self-sacrificing Death; that light, breaking through the agony and ignominy of the Cross, has shone into this dark world with unrivalled effect, awakening the spiritually dead to a new and undying life. It has taken possession of whole nations. It has created this great Christendom and, in the humanity it is diffusing, is making all who bear the Christian name, One. All denominations, however they differ, have their Hospitals and Homes for the suffering and the poor, to thousands of the wretched and the dying the Crucifix, the symbol of Christ's great death, has given comfort and hope.



But the Cross of Christ is not the only testimony to the power of his divinely human personality. The actualized Ideal of human nature, which he is, is yet to be seen in his whole life, as well as in his death. It is hidden by false ideas of the character of the narratives of his life. When they shall be rightly read, and it is discovered what inspired writings they are, plenarily inspired, not miraculously, but by truth and nature which are inspirations of the very Spirit of God, then will Christ be known as he was known to his first disciples.

Our form of faith, Unitarian Christianity, has a high office to discharge: to make the Man Jesus known in all the power of his personal character. Hitherto, the influence of our form of faith, in regard to the nature of Christ, has been purely negative. About a hundred years ago, when Unitarianism first appeared in New England, our fathers did not begin by assaulting the old dogmas which were held to be the distinguishing doctrines of Christianity. They simply dropped them out of their teachings. They confined themselves to affirming the strict unity of the Deity. They did not undertake to say what Christ was. Most of them held him to be a pre-existent, super-angelic being.

The time is coming when it will be seen, not only that he was not one of the three persons of the God-head, but that he was wholly a human being, and

that, to reach and humanize mankind, it was positively essential that he should be, what he appears to be in the New Testament Story, a man, of the same nature with us, ■ suffering, tempted, victorious man.

There are cheering signs of this second coming of Christ, not in the clouds of heaven, but breaking through the dogmas that have so long hidden his divine humanity. The old theology is loosening its paralyzing grasp on the minds of men, and the one great Mediator is beginning to be caught sight of, reconciling not God to man, as Calvinism would have it—O no! but as the Apostle has it, reconciling man to God.

When he shall be thus seen in the simple human beauty and greatness of his life, then shall all nature, so long desecrated by a false theology, receive through him a new consecration, and all the sanctities of life, our natural relations to one another, the ties of kindred, binding us together in families, as parents and children, husbands and wives, brothers and sisters, and things which now seem to have no connection with Religion at all, shall form one grand religious institution for civilizing mankind, and forming all men after the likeness of the Son of God, binding them together in one great brotherhood of the immortal children of God.

We see no proof of any particular Providence over the world. A general Providence is acknowledged, caring only for races, not for individuals. But the

Revelation, through Jesus, of the divine possibilities of human nature shows us that the soul has the power of making all things, failures as well as successes, sorrows as well as joys, death as well as life, all work together to strengthen and to elevate the soul, even as Jesus made suffering tributary to his perfection. Every man has the might of God in him, and may make all trials as subservient to his advantage as if they were all expressly ordered for this purpose. "Thousands of liveried angels" thus wait upon every soul of flesh, and though many are clothed in sackcloth, hiding the livery of heaven, and armed with scourges to drive us from our evil ways,—yet all, all are messengers of the Infinite Father, charged to bring us patience, fortitude, faith, hope, and the peace that passes all understanding.

O friends, never, never suffer yourselves to be plunged in unbelief and despair. Hope on. Hope forever. "We are saved by Hope," said an Apostle. Are you suffering any great loss? Is your little world wrapt in gloom by the sudden departure of one who was the light and life of your lives? Remember in what a depth of despair the disciples of Jesus were plunged when he expired on the Cross. Their fondest expectations were buried in his grave. Did any event ever look so black as his death appeared to them? And yet what an unearthly glory broke from that grim Cross! What peace and joy had they in still believ-

ing in him ! So will it be with what overwhelms you with sorrow now.

Finally, bewildered, lost, as we may be amid the mysteries of Being, one thing is sure : there is existent in the world a mighty Power, the Power of Love, bound to triumph over all evil, not in this brief morning hour as we in our impatience would have it, but in God's good time. Wait ye only upon him, finding your life in the love of God and of man, and a peace and a joy will be yours beyond all that eye hath seen or ear heard, or it hath entered your hearts to imagine.

### THE LIFE DIVINE

That God is Love, unchanging Love,—  
This truth of truths,—do I not know !  
Unnumber'd blessings from above  
Forever come to tell me so!

What have I done? What can I do  
To purchase this perpetual feast?  
Of all the proofs He loves me so,  
I am not worthy of the least.

Forgive, dear God, forgive, forgive,  
Set free this self-bound heart of mine,  
That I may learn for Thee to live  
The self-renouncing Life Divine.

I see it in Thy Holy Child,  
As never since, nor e'er before,  
By not one thought of self beguiled :—  
In him I see it,—and adore.

Ourselves, ah ! never can we find  
Till we are lost, like him, in Thee,  
Loving Thy Love with heart and mind,  
With Thee, through him, made one to be.

There's no return that I can make  
For all Thy goodness God, to me,  
But, doing all things for Thy sake,  
To lose, and find, myself in Thee.

## A GLAD RELIGION

"GOD HATH GIVEN US NOT THE SPIRIT OF FEAR, BUT OF POWER, AND OF LOVE, AND OF A SOUND MIND.—(II *Timothy*, I, 7.)

THE one great want of the present day is, I conceive, the want of a Religion that can be honestly called a Gospel, good news, a happy message; a Religion that will gladden all men's minds, wise and simple, commending itself to the understanding, to the conscience, to the heart, as the most interesting thing in life; as indeed it must be, since, strictly defined, religion is the recognition of the relation of man to the Sovereign Power of the Universe, a relation than which no relation that he stands in is more intimate, identifying him in the highest instincts of his nature, in his wonder, admiration, reverence, and love with the all-animating Power which our science names Force, and knows no more. Is not a Religion that will gladden the soul of man possible? Will it not be realized some time or other and captivate this poor earth of ours, and turn it into the garden of God?

At present, all the world over, Christendom not excepted, Religion is so represented that it appeals mainly, not to our highest sentiments, to the God

within, but to the low passion of Fear. This passion, when it thus predominates, cramps and fetters the mind. It makes men cowardly and cruel, the dupes and victims of the designing and the ambitious. It so paralyzes and lengthens the human countenance that it can hardly smile. The history of Religion,—does it not bear witness to the terrible effects of this passion?

Is it any wonder that now, when the world is becoming somewhat enlightened and Reason is gaining ascendancy over Imagination,—is it any wonder that intelligent and thoughtful persons are everywhere losing interest in Religion? It is ceasing to terrify, but it has no attractive power. There is a widespread indifference to it.

The one great cause of this state of things is the repulsive representation everywhere made of the Supreme Object of Religion. The Sovereign Power is described as a wrathful Being, raging forever against the weak, sinning creatures that He himself has made. It is impossible, it is not in the nature of man, to take a glad interest in Religion when God is thus represented. You may as well look for grapes on thorns, or figs on thistles as expect reverence, love, trust, to spring up in the heart in response to its appeals.

But here we are met by the question: Can there be any representation of the Most High that will not inspire fear? Does not the purest Religion that we

know enjoin the fear of God? But it teaches also that God is Love, supreme, everlasting Love. The fear that He inspires, when thus regarded, is not of the nature of terror. It is not affright, as of an arbitrary, omnipotent despot. The fear of a Being, whose highest attribute is Love, is one with the reverential feeling with which we look up to a higher and better than ourselves. It is to stand in awe of perfect Goodness.

We call God, Father, our Father in Heaven. Tender as this appellation is, it does but hint at the relation between us and Him. He is nearer to us than our earthly parents. Time comes when we must forsake them and obey Him. There is no human relation loving enough adequately to represent what God is to us. So intimate, so ever near to us is the Divine Love, we can never go where it is not. When, forgetful of it, we disobey the commandments written in our inmost being, as surely as our Heavenly Father loves us He punishes us, not in anger, not in vengeance but out of perfect love. "Whom He loveth," says the Scripture, "He chasteneth and scourgeth every child that He receiveth." We are created to suffer that we may become true children of God. Thus by suffering Christ was made perfect. And the most devoted of his followers glorified in tribulations, because they brought him patience, experience, hope. As it is here and now, so, I sacredly believe, will it be hereafter and



forever. All suffering tends to correct and to strengthen. God is unchangeable.

When this view of the eternal Providence becomes a ruling principle, then all holy affections will spring up in the heart spontaneously. Just as the earth answers to the influences of the sun and the rain in flowers and fruits, so will adoration, trust, and love spring up in response to what is seen to be venerable and lovely, by a law as sure as the laws of a physical creation.

And then too we shall have a Religion that will need no argument, having the instinctive witness of its truth in our own consciousness, overflowing with a gladness that will irradiate all the world around us, appealing not to slavish fears, but to those higher sentiments which are the inspiration of the most High.

Nothing moves the heart of man so profoundly, so universally, as personal character, human character. In the whole universe of visible existences there is no phenomenon, no spectacle of the boundless heavens, though we stand awe-struck before it, no pomp of Churches and Cathedrals that moves us so deeply, as good and great men. These it is that lift us up out of the depths of our weakness and darkness into communion and fellowship with the Highest and Best.

Accordingly, as such a Religion as I have said is greatly needed, we have incomparably the fullest man-

ifestation in the person of him in whose name we gather in this place. Imperfect as has been the conception of him, he has yet so moved the world that we count our years from his birth as if all that went before that event passed for nothing. In him was the spirit, not of fear, but of power, of love, and of a sound mind.

The true idea of Christ has been greatly dimmed,—it is too great to be wholly hidden,—by the erroneous views taken of his nature, preventing us from having that appreciation of his true greatness, that entire sympathy with him which can be felt only as he is seen to be of one and the same nature with us all.

In truth, when the story of his life is rightly read, not only is it apparent that he was made in all points as we are, but that, because he was of all men the most of a man and in him was developed as in no other born of woman, the highest and best in every human being, he is emphatically the Revelation of God present in man as He is present in the whole world of things.

A distinction is made between Natural and Revealed Religion, as if they were two different things. In fact, all nature is a Revelation and all Revelation is natural. The heavens above us reveal the Divine Glory and the earth beneath shows forth the presence of God.

Man is, among all that we see, the fullest revelation of the Supreme, created in his image, king over all by the grace of God. All things do him service. The

lightnings run on his errands. For the astronomer the spider spins her web. Stars invisible to the naked eye help to guide the navigator across the trackless ocean.

Of all men, of all the good and great, no one has appeared on this earth so powerful to inspire veneration, trust, adoring love, as the Man of Nazareth, and these sentiments are no human creations, but the inspirations of God ; once awakened, they prompt to the discharge of all the offices resulting from the relations in which men are placed to another and to the world around them. These divine affections render man here and hereafter, now and forever the most potent agent in the grand progressive work of the re-creation of mankind which has been going on for ages and will go on for ages to come.

The personality of Jesus, being thus powerful and peerless, how could it be but that his immediate friends, who felt its power as it has never been felt since, should beggar language in speaking of him, and that the lofty titles in which they spoke of him, should afterwards come to be taken to the letter and he should be believed to have been more than human. Thus dogmas and theological schemes, in the course of time, gathered around him, which, by modes of interpretation the most fanciful and irrational, the simple narratives of his brief career have been made to authorize.

Now, however, when reason is assuming its rightful

authority, and knowledge of the ways and works of the Sovereign Power is greatly enlarged, the idea of Christ as a preternatural being is out of all harmony with all else that is true ; the indispensable characteristic of whatever claims to be true is its agreement with all else that is true. So widely is the lack of this trait of truth felt in the erroneous representations of Jesus, so falsely has the New Testament story been construed, that to large and increasing numbers the whole subject of Religion has lost all reality, and is looked upon as little else than a legend and a dream.

O friends, is it not sad to see how many are seeking to slake the thirst of the divine soul at broken cisterns that can hold no water, such as Materialism, Spiritualism, Theosophism, Ethical Culture and I know not what, while close at hand in the person of Christ, is a full fountain of life and power, of which, if a man drinks, from within him will well up rivers of living water never to be exhausted ! How many are wandering in hopeless ways, questioning whether there be any Providence over the world that cares for us individually, whether it be worth while to live, and whether all things be not blindly rushing on, not to the better, but to the worse !

I declare to you, friends, my deliberate and profound conviction that of all the great and good, the knowledge of whom has come to us by report, there is no one of whom we can have so distinct and vivid an idea as of

the Man of Nazareth. No biography has ever been written that gives us, when rightly construed, so natural, so lifelike a portrait of its subject as that contained in the four Gospels.

And for this reason: Without a thought of giving any description of him of whom they tell, they simply report his acts and sayings, and his sayings are to a marked extent not abstract and didactic, but exclamatory and interrogative, connected for the most part with incidents, novel and unprecedented, not easily to be forgotten. And there is not in these narratives the shadow of any appearance of a design on the part of the narrators to preserve the slightest consistency in the particulars related. And yet the result of it all is a perfectly self-consistent and all-consistent portrait of him whose words and works they recount.

And what a portrait! Every lineament glowing beyond words, with a faith in God and in man which nothing could shake, with an unwearied, self-forgetting sympathy with our poor, suffering Humanity which nothing could exhaust. Where, where in all history is there to be found a scene parallel to that in which the central figure is a young man standing arraigned for his life, alone, forsaken by every friend, confronted with all the powers of Church and State, calm, silent, self-possessed, with the roar of a mob, yelling for his blood, ringing in his ears? Self-possessed, do I say?

Oh, how weak are these poor words! Nay, he stood there, wrapt in a robe of angelic innocence, and with a bearing that could not have been more regal had he had the whole world at his feet.

Let me not be told that the writings from which such a result may be obtained, are mere disconnected collections of legends, the fictions of a barbarous age. When I am brought to believe that the Universe is the result of a fortuitous concourse of atoms, then and not before I shall be prepared to regard the New Testament story as made up of fables and legends.

The Gospels being such as I have described, their authority as true histories is attested by their internal character. The argument is cumulative. It is based, not upon only a few scattered marks of truth, but upon the number impressed upon every page of these wonderful writings. I find them to be inspired, plenarily inspired, not preternaturally, but inspired by truth and nature. The writers never dreamed of how much they were telling.

Listen to me, dear friends,—the subject is of untold importance at this hour,—while I mention one or two instances of what I mean by the signs of truth wrought into the texture of these primitive Records of Christianity.

In the account of that most extraordinary event, the restoration of Lazarus to life, it is stated that, when at the call of Jesus, Lazarus appeared at the mouth of

the sepulchre, Jesus said: "Loose him and let him go." At first sight this direction seems a sudden descent to a very small particular. We wonder why it was thought worth while to mention it. A moment's reflection shows us the reason. Just think how overpowering must have been the effect upon the bystanders of the apparition of Lazarus, blindfolded by the napkin wrapt over his face and staggering in the ample folds of the shroud. All present were struck dumb and motionless, as if turned into gazing marble at the vision. Not a soul stirred until the voice of Jesus broke the spell of overwhelming amazement and bade them go to the assistance of Lazarus and loosen the shroud that he might move and walk freely.

Not a word is said of the immediate effect upon the beholders of the appearance of the dead man alive again. Undesignedly on the part of the narrators, it is left to be inferred, as it safely may be, from these brief words of Jesus, which recalled them to themselves.

Again: when upon a certain occasion, a man, held to be possessed by an evil spirit, was instantaneously relieved by Jesus, and Jesus was speaking with intense earnestness to the crowd that gathered around him, some one called out to him that his mother was there outside the crowd, wanting to speak with him. Jesus exclaimed, "Who is my mother?" It is from this exclamation that the French biographer of Jesus concludes that Jesus was wanting in natural affection. He!

He, who in the terrible death-agony of crucifixion forgot himself in remembering the mother who bore him!

Consider the occasion upon which this exclamation broke from the lips of Jesus. In the crowd were certain persons, enemies of Jesus, who were stung to madness at hearing it suggested that this miserable Galilean whom no one knew anything about, must be the son of David, the magnificent Messiah! They could not deny the wonderful cure they had just witnessed. In their blind rage they declared that Jesus was helped by Baalzebub, the very demon of demons; Jesus, on his part, was shocked to the last degree at the blasphemy of ascribing a manifest work of humanity to an evil spirit. Pouring forth a torrent of denunciation upon it, he was suddenly interrupted by a voice calling out to him that his mother wanted him. Carried away as he was for the moment by the righteous passion of his indignation, lost to every other thought than that upon which his whole soul was concentrated, how could it be but that the slightest allusion to any other thing, even to his dearest personal relations, should seem to him an intolerable intrusion? For the moment everything was forgotten but what he was speaking of. In one of the Gospels, the same occasion is narrated, but no mention is made of the voice calling to Jesus that his mother wanted him. It is said that a woman in the crowd lifted up her voice and pronounced his mother blessed in having



borne such a son. Putting the two narratives together, is it not evident that this woman was prompted to break forth in a benediction upon the mother of Jesus by hearing the voice that called out to him that his mother wanted him? In reply to the woman's benediction, Jesus manifests the same sensitiveness to interruption that he showed at the first mention of his mother. "Blessed rather," he said to the woman, "are they who hear the word of God and keep it." Thus undesignedly two different narratives harmonize.

It is such signs as these of the handiwork of truth and nature, in which the Gospels abound when they are read as accounts of a man made in all respects as we are, that attest their truth. So distinct and human is the personality which they present that, I repeat, admiration, reverence, adoring love spring up unbidden in our hearts, and we see our own nature glorified in him. These sentiments are evidences of our ability to aspire after and to realize in ourselves something of the divine qualities so Godlike in Christ.

Science is revealing to us the immensity and eternity of the Universe in which we have our being, and impressing us with a sense of our material insignificance. What is to become of us, infinitesimals as we are, in the stupendous sum of things? Does anything await us but to be swept out of existence as worthless dust? Wise men and philosophers ponder and discuss the destiny of man. The Destiny of man! Lo! In the

person of Christ the question is grandly answered. In him has been manifested what we were brought into being for and fashioned as we are : to hunger after perfection, to be perfect as God is perfect, to grow forever in wisdom and goodness. When once we believe with the heart in this our destiny, we shall stand in awe of the sacredness of our nature, and sin no more. Then all doubts and misgivings concerning God and Immortality will be scattered as the idle wind, and, as we grow in faith and love, we shall have in our own consciousness a living, ever-present witness of God and of our own undying existence.

If Religion, instead of being a creed, a dogma, a spirit of fear and gloom, is ever to take full possession of us as a veritable Gospel, gladdening the inmost soul, the spirit that was in Jesus must be the life and soul of it.

And where, in Heaven's name, where else but just here and now, in our actual relations, filial, parental, conjugal, fraternal, the institutions of God, can the spirit that has come forth into the world from the heart of Christ find its sphere? Behold! All things are ours. All wait to aid us to fulfil our destiny, to feed the hunger, intellectual and spiritual, which will increase the more it is fed, and which nothing below the Highest and Best can content.

Distress not yourselves about the salvation of your souls. The Infinite Love will take care of them, be

assured, when the spirit of the Lord Jesus, one with the spirit of God, is steadily gaining the ascendancy in your hearts and lives. Then, too, we shall have a Religion of Gladness, a Religion, not of Fear, but of Power, and of Love, and of a sound mind.

## JESUS AND CHRISTIANITY

WHEN Jesus said that to love The Highest and The Best with all the heart, and with all the soul, and with all the mind, and with all the strength, is the first and greatest of all the Commandments, he did but declare a law written from the first in ineffaceable characters in the inmost nature of man. We are not more truly made to breathe, than we are to love what is seen to be lovely. We are bound, therefore, to love God supremely because He is supreme in loveliness. It is, I say, a law, the highest law of our nature. Thus are we made.

And not only so; the love of God, that is, as I understand it, the love of whatever manifests the perfection of the Sovereign Power not only in the Universe around us, but above all, in man, in whom the Highest is most fully revealed—(the heavens declare the glory of God; but beyond all the God-declaring wonders of Astronomy, is not the Astronomer the greatest wonder?)—I repeat, the love of God, thus defined, as the love of all that is seen to be good and true in conduct, in life, in nature, is the most powerful affection which man is capable of cherishing. Let it be the all-com-

manding principle of our lives, and it will animate all our active powers as nothing else can; it will lift us above the impenetrable mysteries by which this mortal state is so darkly overcast; it will tune our whole being in unison with the Most High; and it will make us fellow-laborers with Him, partakers of His Peace, the Peace profound, that passes all understanding, and which the most glowing pictures of the bliss of Heaven can only faintly represent.

Not all at once, ah! no; not within the narrow limits of this brief life, is the love of God, this divine principle, this spring of illimitable power, this pledge of immortality, manifested in its fulness, save in a very, very few. In most of us, the heart within us is blindly yearning for it, but the flesh—how strong to quench the spirit! Still, eternity is before us, and the good God is over us, and though we wander far and are lost, He will seek us until we are found, and by His faithful discipline, by His rod and His staff, we shall be made, hereafter if not here, to know Him, and the loveliness of His love.

Such, in brief and substantially, is what I hold to be Religion, Christianity; not a creed, not a mode of opinion, but an affection that may temper, more or less, all creeds, even the most diverse: a Spirit, of which Jesus of Nazareth is the fullest manifestation.

Religion thus understood, must it not be, of all subjects, the most interesting and attractive, commending

itself to every man's reason and conscience, winning instant faith and reverence?

But ah! dear friends, how far is this from being the case! From being a Religion of Love, Christianity soon became a Religion of Fear. It has a great name in the world. It is spread over a large portion of the earth. Whole nations unite in observing the birthday of him from whom it sprang. But to how many is its divine beauty, as it is shown in Jesus, its supreme charm, attracting them to it as children to a mother's arms? It has been remarked that the mass of mankind all over the globe are held, politically and religiously, in the paralyzing bondage of Fear. Is Christendom any exception to this fact? Men flee to Religion for salvation; salvation from what? Is it from ungoverned passions and degrading habits, from sensuality and worldliness, from pride and contempt and malice? Or is it not from the terrors of the world to come, from the ever-burning fire, so it has been taught, kindled by the vengeance of the Almighty in the world beyond the grave?

How is it that Religion, as shown in the divine beauty of the life of Christ, which drew publicans and sinners around him, has undergone this great change from the love which casts out fear to the fear which casts out love?

I could not begin, within the limits of this discourse, to answer this question in full, and enumerate all the

causes that have combined to produce this most melancholy transformation.

There is one train of thought, however, deeply interesting to my mind as bearing upon this question, to which I pray your earnest attention.

So far as we can see into the Universe of things, the highest power we obtain any knowledge of is Love. Love is God, invincible and all-conquering. There is no evil that it will not, sooner or later, overcome. Love it is, that when witnessed in only a single act of self-sacrifice, moves the inmost heart of us, our deepest emotions, admiration, and reverence. The most hardened confess its power. The spectacle of the midnight heavens, awe-inspiring as it is, has no such power to move us.

Since such is the power of Love, since, as I say, a solitary instance of self-sacrifice for Love's sake affects us thus deeply, only think how transcendent must be the power of such a character as his whose name we bear; a character, distinguished not by one nor an occasional act of disinterestedness, but habitually, throughout, from first to last, by every quality that exalts the life and commands the veneration of mankind; a character uniting the loftiest courage with a woman's tenderness. Never before nor since on this earth has there been witnessed such a vision of the highest and best we can conceive of.

And yet, by the way, there are those who, seeing

Jesus only through a blinding mythical mist, would fain persuade us that whatever personal power he possessed was long ago exhausted ; and that now, in this enlightened time, he may be dispensed with. The idea ! One might as well affirm that the sun there in the heavens has died out, and we could do better without it,—our little electric lights forsooth, could we only get from them as much heat as light, would serve every purpose.

Let it be that, wise as were his teachings, Jesus shared in the popular beliefs of his time, beliefs at variance, apparently, with the pervading spirit of his teachings, only the more impressively does it appear that, great as was the Teacher, the Man was far greater than the Teacher. Where is there another of whom this can be said, and whose practice goes beyond his teaching ? No words can adequately express the personal character of Christ. Facts only, the facts of his life, the Handwriting of God, can represent it.

And be it borne in mind, he was no preternatural phenomenon, but a wholly natural human being, surrounded, as we all are, by this same awful mystery of existence. It is because he was so in all respects, on all occasions, that he moves us so deeply through one and the same nature in him and in us all.

And here, to pause over one particular, brief, but most significant. I use with slight variations the language of another—I love to quote it, it has such a



ring of faith and reality : " The conduct of Jesus, for example," says Sydney Smith, " towards Peter is characteristic of a majestic simplicity. When Peter had sworn that he was no friend of his, Jesus turned and looked at Peter. If that look taught Peter to repent, it should teach us to believe. The fraud and the folly that we witness have no such singleness of heart, no such plain majesty of action. Whenever we behold such signs as these, we hail them as the marks which God has put upon truth and good faith. In reading the accounts of Christ's trial and death, the fresh and sudden feelings of the heart all acquit him, all praise him, all believe in him. We all feel as Pontius Pilate, his judge, felt, who, when he had looked at him and heard him speak, broke from the judgment seat, and dipped his trembling hands in water, and as he dashed it off, cried aloud to the multitude, "I call you all to witness, I am guiltless of the blood of this innocent man."

And thus it is with the whole story of the life of Jesus. Could we only forget the theological and mythical speculations that dim and distort the simple human idea of him, and with new, fresh eyes read the story as of the life of a brother man, made in all respects as we ourselves are, we should kneel down in imagination with the poor outcast woman to kiss his feet, and bathe them with our tears.

But what I would now fix your attention upon is

this, that when we have a just appreciation of the character of Christ, we shall understand, as never before, the exalted terms in which he was spoken of by those whose privilege it was to be in constant attendance upon him, the hourly witnesses of that God-like life. We shall see that it could not be otherwise than that they should beggar language in speaking of him. Even had they been cold, unimaginative Occidentals as we are, they could not have failed to resort to the most exalted phrases in describing him. But they were Orientals, and therefore they exhausted the wealth of their language in expressing their sense of the greatness of his person. They, and those to whom the events of his career were new and fresh, pronounced him the Brightness of the Divine Glory, the very Image of God, God manifest in the flesh. And as then a first-born child, or an only child, was especially beloved, they called Jesus the first-born of the whole creation, the only begotten of the Father. The passionate enthusiasm with which he inspired them, prompted them thus to lavish upon him the loftiest titles. It is always so. Deep feeling never pauses to weigh and qualify its utterances; and they are never to be taken to the letter.

But the time came when the exalted terms in which Jesus was spoken of by his first devoted disciples ceased to be understood as the irrepressible effusions of a boundless enthusiasm, and were taken literally as

declaring him to be a superhuman being. Thus was it brought about that he was held to be, not a man, divine only in the perfection of his human nature, but the very God Himself, coming down from Heaven, clothed in a human shape.

Then, when he was thus conceived of, the wonder-loving ages that followed were not content with the simple faith, that, moved by pity for his sinful brothers wandering like lost sheep without a shepherd, he had lived and died to breathe into them a new spirit, the Holy Spirit of Love, and lead them back to the outstretched arms of the Infinite Father. There must have been, so their guilty fears suggested, a more mysterious and awful purpose, for which the Almighty came down to earth and took the form of a man.

Then it was that a scheme of Salvation, so-called, came to be planned, a system of theology, woven out of dogmas as unchristian as they were barbarous and irrational,—salvation not from the soul-degrading bondage of evil passions, but from the torments of a fiery hell, kindled by Almighty Wrath, and burning forever and ever. Since, then, it was impossible to love God supremely, with a love that casteth out fear, when He was thus represented as a vengeful Deity, raging against the whole race of man for the sin of their first progenitor, who can wonder that the inmost heart of our nature, athirst and agonizing for

an Object of worship that it could love and trust in, deified the tenderest of human affections, maternal love, symbolized in the person of the mother of Jesus.

Thus it was that Religion, from being "a spirit of love and power, and a sound mind," realized in the person of Christ, was transformed into a terror, rendering the ignorant and superstitious, ever ready as they were to be led, the trembling slaves of the few who were equally ready to lead and to lord it over their lives and consciences.

So it has been in the past. So is it still in the present. Fear it is which, to a great extent, is the predominating power that binds men to Religion.

But the world is changing. To ages of superstition and intellectual bondage, there is succeeding a time of widespread indifference to Religion, and boundless scepticism.

And the same doctrines that once fettered the minds of men, and drove them to Religion by the lash of fear, are now driving away from it increasing numbers, who are becoming wholly indifferent to it, or who go the length of denying its claims to any consideration whatever. The most popular philosophical writer of the day finds the origin of Religion in dreams!

Indeed, I question whether there is anything that tends more directly to produce indifference to Religion and utter unbelief than the theology that passes

for Religion. As the phenomena of the Heavens, eclipses and comets, have ceased to cause alarm, so the dogmas that have usurped the name of Christianity no longer command the assent of the intelligent and thoughtful. A cold and heartless conformity may be still accorded, for peace's sake, to the forms of Religion. But, beyond this, numbers there are who take no interest in it, or who, believing the Bible authorizes the doctrines which it is maintained that it does, reject the Bible altogether. Thus both the Old Testament and the New, without inquiry into their real character and contents, are mostly regarded as having no historical authority, as being made up, like the sacred writings of other religions of the Orient, of fables and legends.

It is not necessary to specify here the doctrines alike unscriptural and irrational, which have thus rendered the whole subject so repulsive. Who is not familiar with them!

There is one radical error, however, to which I beg your particular attention, an error that not only desecrates all Nature, and pronounces all history outside of the history of the Church, profane, but also divests the New Testament narratives of all historical character, leading to the conclusion that, if there is any truth in them, it is so mixed up with the fabulous that it is impossible to gather from them any clearly defined idea of him of whom they tell.

The error of which I speak as thus prolific of doubt and denial, underlies the theology of the whole Christian world. It is the assumption that a messenger from Heaven must prove his divine mission by working miracles, by showing himself possessed of preternatural power. So only, it is maintained, can it appear that he speaks with divine authority.

Now, to my mind, nothing has become plainer, after a long study of the New Testament histories, than that directly the reverse is the truth. Not by suspending the laws of Nature, but by obeying them, the least as well as the greatest, is a man proved to be inspired by the same Power that animates the whole world of things. Then, when in his whole being and working he is in harmony with all Nature, all Nature bears witness to him.

Furthermore, how is it possible to prove a miracle in the sense in which the word is universally used, as a departure from the God-established order of the world? That a law of Nature can be broken is impossible, impossible in the nature of God. He is unchangeable, without variableness or the shadow of turning.

Everything true is in harmony with all else that is true.\* When, therefore, it is claimed for any event

---

"I look upon the discovery of anything which is true as a valuable acquisition which cannot possibly hurt or obstruct the good effect of any other truth whatsoever, for they all partake of one common essence

that it is out of the natural order of Creation, there is nothing for us to which to appeal in order to determine its truth—nothing by which to distinguish it from a fiction of the human imagination.

Or, if the testimony to its reality be complete and irresistible, we must treat it as we treat all anomalous phenomena, and conclude that it is to be referred to a law as yet unknown. Indeed, such has been the thought, in regard to the alleged miracles of the New Testament, of more than one eminent Christian writer. Dr. Channing, in his Duddleian Lecture, while accepting the miracles of Jesus in the popular sense, suggests that they may be in accord with some unknown, higher order of things.

After all, granting even that miracles are possible, and can be proved to have occurred, I make bold to affirm that there are no miracles in the Gospels, no departures from the known laws of nature. The occurrences which are thus represented, were miracles only in the etymological sense of the word: they were simply wonders. So far from being out of the natural course of things they are most striking instances of a law of nature. And for this view of them we have the highest possible authority, the most explicit au-

---

and necessarily coincide with one another, and, like the drops of rain which fall separately into the river, mix themselves at once with the stream and strengthen the general current,"—Middleton's *Free Inquiry*. A passage which, as we learn from Roger's *Table Talk*, Porson, the great Grecian, loved to quote.

thority of Jesus himself. Most emphatically did he ascribe them, not to any preternatural gift that he possessed, but to the power of God, working, as that always works, through a law, through a known law of nature, through the influence of Faith, of mind over matter, of the spirit over the flesh.

According to the record—indulge me, friends, in repeating the story, it is worth being told over and over again—the first occurrence of the alleged miracles—if only we read between the lines what is written there by Truth and Nature—was purely accidental, unprepared for, unexpected.

Upon the first appearance of Jesus in the synagogue of Capernaum, all present, deeply impressed by the air of authority with which he spoke, and which was due to the profound conviction of truth that inspired him—the like of it they had never witnessed before—were suddenly startled by the outcry of an insane man who chanced to be present, and who, according to the belief of the time, was possessed by a foul spirit. Moved, by the commanding manner of Jesus, as all present were more or less, losing control of himself, and speaking in the character of the evil spirit by which he imagined himself tormented, the man cried out, hailing Jesus as the Holy One of God. Instinctively Jesus, using the popular language of the time, virtually commanded the maniac to hush. Thus directly spoken to by Jesus, by whose appearance he had been already so deeply



moved, the man became so agitated that he fell down in a fit, but shortly recovering himself, he became calm and self-possessed. Only one construction could be put by all present upon this result: Jesus had shown astonishing power, exorcising a demon. He left the synagogue, followed, as the prevailing excitement justifies us in imagining, by a crowd, to the home of Peter, where Peter's mother-in-law was lying ill of a fever. The report of what had occurred in the synagogue, it is natural to suppose, preceded him, and was told, with excited looks and in hurried accents, to the suffering woman, who caught the enthusiasm of the hour, so that, when Jesus went into the chamber where she lay, his bare presence, the touch of his hand, as he took hers, thrilled her whole being; and she gazed up at him, her heart throbbing, and her eyes dilated with unutterable wonder and admiration; every nerve was freshly strung, the fever vanished, she rose from her bed, her strength returned, and she was able to assist in the offices of hospitality. Lo! here was a new marvel to add to the universal excitement. It was the Sabbath. At sundown, when the Sabbath was ended, the rumor of these wonders having spread far and wide, a great crowd, "the whole city," one of the Gospels says, besieged the house where Jesus was, many among them coming to be healed of their various diseases. "He healed them all," it is stated, with the natural exaggeration of the hour. Doubtless there were among them

some whose infirmities were of such a nature as to render them peculiarly susceptible to the bare sight of him and to the sound of his voice.

What the effect was of this state of things upon Jesus himself—that it took him wholly unawares, strikingly appears from the fact that he could not sleep that night. The next morning, so it is related, he rose very early, “long before day,” and went away to a secluded place by himself. And when his disciples went in search of him and found him, and told him that everybody was inquiring for him, he refused to return to the scene of those exciting occurrences, declaring that he must go elsewhere and proclaim the kingdom of Heaven, thus intimating that he had a far higher purpose than the healing of bodily diseases.

Thus far there is not a syllable in the Gospels that requires us to believe that Jesus contemplated this extraordinary state of things. Those sudden cures took place unexpectedly on his part. They were due to an influence which the will has no part in producing, the unconscious influence of his commanding personality; to what, for want of a better word, may be called his personal magnetism, as inseparable from his being as fragrance is from the flower, or light from the sun; identical in kind, but far greater in degree, with the power by which the professional exorcists of his time obtained more or less command of the insane and the infirm, although they doubtless attributed their suc-

cess to their incantations. We have familiar examples of the same power at the present day.\*

As unconscious of what caused this wonder-working faith in him as he was of his breathing, Jesus beheld in those sudden physical effects, nothing but the power of God working through the faith of the sufferers. Not a word does he breathe of any preternatural gift in himself, to which they were to be ascribed. "Thy faith hath healed thee." "According to thy faith be it done unto thee." Such was his invariable language.

Judging from the bold terms in which he afterwards spoke of the power of Faith, I cannot but think—he was always learning from events—that it came to him as a revelation, this extraordinary manifestation of it; and that, great as was his own faith, it must have been quickened into extraordinary strength by these instances of its power. It came to him like a voice from Heaven, assuring him that He who made the heart of man, and inspired human faith with this life-giving influence, was with him. And subsequently it was by his own faith that he broke the deep slumber of the grave, and on more than one occasion recalled the recently dead to life.

---

\* In those days, not only insanity, but all forms of disease were ascribed to evil spirits. A like faith in the influence of spirits prevailed among the ancient Romans, who built altars and temples innumerable, to gods and goddesses whose power to heal all manner of sickness was fervently invoked. (See Lanciani's "Ancient Rome in the Light of Recent Discoveries." 1889.)

But here, perhaps, dear friends, you shrink from following me. You pause and hesitate to believe that Faith can have such extraordinary power. That the insane, and persons afflicted with diseases of the nerves, should be instantly relieved by it, the sceptical may find but little difficulty in admitting. But that it should raise the dead—Oh no, that taxes our faith too heavily. That is going too far.

All that I have to say here is that to assert that death is the extinction of life because it extinguishes all the signs of life cognizable to us, is to assume that nothing exists beyond the limit of our perceptions. It is to beg the whole question concerning death. The whole life and death of Jesus bear witness to the power of his faith, of which I know no equal instance. Never, on any occasion, is he more impressively himself than when he recalled the widow's son, and the young daughter of Jairus, and Lazarus to life. Never is the directness and unrivalled dignity of his bearing more striking. Nothing jars with our sense of the consistency of his exalted and original character. He used no charms. He muttered no adjurations. He made no mysterious applications to the diseased body; he addressed himself directly to the sufferer himself, speaking to the dead as he spoke to the living, in perfect faith that the dead would hear him even as the living heard him; thereby, by the way, throwing a ray of light into the darkness of the great Mystery, teach-

ing us that, when all visible signs of life have disappeared, the departed are not instantly so far away that they cannot hear and obey a voice that rings with a faith as powerful as his.

The view that I have now presented of the miracles of the New Testament is, to my mind, my friends, of indescribable interest and importance. It relieves the history of Christ of all the difficulty involved in the common idea of those events, which has proved an insurmountable stumbling-block to many serious and thoughtful minds. It renders the history at once natural and credible. It shows us that he from whom our Religion came was proved to be inspired by God, not by any power claimed and exercised by him over the laws of Nature, but by his entire conformity therewith under all circumstances.

The adaptation of the teachings of Christ to the nature, needs and aspirations of the human soul, is a theme often dwelt upon as a proof that the same power that made man inspired the Religion of Christ. The view of the miracles that I have set before you, shows that his works as well as his words are characterized by the same consistency with human nature and the divine order of the world.

It is in relation to his character that this way of regarding his alleged miracles is especially interesting and important. Not only does it divest him of all appearance of a mere vulgar wonder-worker, seeking

to gratify the passion for the marvelous, it shows him to us in his relation to those sudden physical effects that he wrought, in an attitude than which there is no respect in which his personal greatness is so striking. It is Godlike. He wrought those marvels as simply as he breathed. Seeing in them only the power and glory of God, it seems never to have occurred to him to take any credit for them to himself. To the popular applause that followed, he was utterly insensible. He was no more moved by it than he was at the last by the savage imprecations of his enemies. He took no self-flattering advantage of the enthusiasm he inspired. High and noble as was his purpose, he might well have held himself justified in availing himself of those marvels to further that purpose. But he was far above the weakness to which many, whom the world accounts great, have succumbed: the weakness of persuading himself that the end justifies the means. When the air was rent by the shouts of the multitude, and all eyes were fastened on him, he was as natural, as devoid of all undue self-consciousness, as if not an eye were observing him, not a voice raised in adoring wonder and admiration.

Were the wonderful works ascribed to him mere fables, invented to magnify him, it is incredible that they should not only not mar the consistency of his exalted character, but create in us a positively new and deeper sense of his peerless personal greatness.

I could as easily believe that any great work of human genius, the Apollo Belvidere, for example, owed its perfection to additions made to it by rude, barbarian hands.

Jesus, as the true Idea of Religion embodied, is the Divine Word, written in immortal characters even in those Godlike personal qualities of his, which the heart reads as its mother tongue, and, needing no argument for their divine truth, burns, as it reads, with veneration and love. And these sentiments, familiar as they are, are no fancies, no creations of man's; but the direct, sacred inspirations of the All-animating Spirit.

But we must beware lest, in reading the Divine Word, we miss its blessed import. "Every true man," said Jesus, "hearkens to my voice." And again: "No man can come to me, except the Father, who sent *me*, draw *him*;" in other words: Not until we are moved by the same spirit that moved him, shall we attain to a full vision of the greatness of his life. It is the indispensable condition to the knowledge of all truth, that no bias of sect or party, no private interest, no pride, no prejudice must sway us. Then, when the Spirit of Truth which alone leads into the way of all truth, the determination to see all things as they are, guides us, then Christ, the Representative of Man as of God, will be seen as he is, "the bright consummate flower of Humanity," gradually filling

the ages with the all-purifying fragrance of Heaven. The Sonship and Brotherhood of all mankind, Religion in its attractive beauty, will be revealed to us ; and Life, no longer so poor that not a few are questioning whether it be worth the living, will be illumined by a light, before which all doubts and denials will fade away like the mists of the morning : The Light of the knowledge of the glory of God radiating from the Person of Jesus Christ.



## OUR TROUBLES, GOD'S ANGELS

WE all have our tribulations, in more familiar phrase, our troubles. Not a soul on earth is free from them. Not a day passes that does not bring us annoyances in one shape or another. What tongue can enumerate them? Children, domestics, the people with whom we associate, or transact business, the weather, heat and cold, and rain and snow, our garments and our dinners,—all these are incessantly giving us trouble. And, in addition, when real causes of worry are absent, imagination is on the alert with a bountiful supply, and the stuff which imagination deals in, serves the purpose of putting us out of tune just as effectually as if it were real, and a great deal more effectually, since it can be made to swell out to any size. Then there is the worst trouble of all, our unregulated hearts and tempers, ruffled most often, not so much by provocation from without as by dissatisfaction with ourselves, the humiliating consciousness that nettles us of being false to the dictates of duty, the stinging sense of not being loyal to our own idea of what is just and pure and kind. And when we have this self-dissatisfaction, and our own consciences are

reproaching us, we are ready to put all the shame and the blame upon outward circumstances no matter how trivial, and to treat our dearest friends with a rudeness that wounds them, as if it were they and not ourselves, who are at fault.

Many of the daily troubles that we magnify are so insignificant that, after they have passed, we cannot look back on ourselves without blushing and laughing at the pitiable spectacle we must have presented. And yet what a large part of one's life do these petty griefs make up! They are the little things that, daily working like the animalculæ that build islands, must influence and form the character, and as they are met, qualify or unfit us for all improvement, all happiness, all hope. I have just said that we laugh at ourselves when we look back and recollect how, upon one occasion or another, we allowed some trifle to make us angry or sullen, how we fretted and lost all capacity of enjoyment; and the blessings, the possession of which others perhaps are envying us, were powerless to give us any pleasure.

But it is a very serious, a very sad thing to think what a waste of life is thus going on, how much of this brief life has gone for worse than nothing, what a meagre pittance of crumbs we have gotten from the bountiful table the good God has spread before us.

Pause now, dear friends, and let us take this quiet hour for thoughtful consideration. How is it with us

in this respect? Are our minds made up to let things go on in this way to the melancholy end? Are we willing that life, instead of flowing smoothly on to "the immortal sea," gathering depth and volume as it flows, sweeping away all obstructions, and spreading fertility and beauty all along its banks—that, instead of this, it shall hurry on, a wild, sluggish, shallow stream, now black and stagnant, and now brawling over every pebble, nourishing only a tangle of brambles that hide it from the blessed sun, and disappearing at last in the barren sand?

Surely, we all want to save ourselves trouble. There are those, it is true, who seem to find relief and satisfaction in looking at the dark, troublesome side of everything. But even such persons, I doubt not, would, after all, be glad to be relieved of the worries they seem to find pleasure in giving way to. It is the study of all the world to multiply trouble-saving machines. Our civilization, or what we boast of as our civilization, consists mainly in the increasing number of devices to make life as easy as possible, to render our hands and feet superfluous, to pad our condition all round so that there shall not be a single rumple to necessitate any effort. And to get rid of the troublesome faculty of thinking, have we not sects, churches, professing to render all inquiry, all thinking for oneself, all judgment needless? So bent are we on getting rid of all trouble that it seems as if, could we

only still keep alive, we should be glad to escape the trouble of breathing, had we but some patent contrivance to take its place.

But, with all our inventions, the amount of positive relief from troubles, bears no proportion to their number. Rather do our troubles increase with the increase of our means of lessening them. Our dwellings are larger and more commodious, nothing seems to be wanting to make living in them comfortable. But are we in greater harmony with the things around us? Or, rather, is there not often a sad contrast between these stately fronts with their costly furniture, and the murmurs of discontent and the bickerings going on within. Has there not been generated, instead of ease, the world-wide trouble of housekeeping, which the dwellers in tents happily never know, and which many a woman thinks that only saints, and hardly they, can endure without utter loss of patience?

O, friends, it is all in vain, that we look in this way for the relief we crave. Mere increase of the means of ridding ourselves of trouble is sure to increase it. Large houses are large cares, and luxuries are heavy burthens. We all have our misgivings, we all know in our hearts that it is so. But, enervated by our way of living, we shrink from looking things in the face, and conducting ourselves accordingly. We are blinded, hurried along by the strong current of universal example, by the settled faith and fashion of the world

around us. And thus we are driven on to secure the means, as if they were the end. And so the desire to make the means our own, becomes the ruling habit and passion, just as blind, just as ungovernable as the passion for strong drink ; and when it has got the mastery it will be gratified at all costs. There is no wear and tear of life, age, and of conscience, that we are not ready to submit to, and so trouble, instead of being lightened, is fearfully increased. How many are there who are making their fortunes at the cost of all ability to enjoy them after they are made, all power to lighten or endure the troubles of life ? We have no difficulty in satisfying our own needs. We can command, it may be, the best of everything and enough of it and to spare. But then there is the haunting fear of losing what we have got, or of missing the chance of increasing it. Countless claims are made on us, by which we are kept in a state of constant annoyance, to which we can become insensible only when our hearts are turned into stone, and then, indeed, we do not suffer ; but how then can we enjoy ?

Is not this turning life to a very poor account ? Setting our heart upon accumulating the external means of escaping trouble, what have we to show as the result ? Untroubled lives ? Or only these frail bodies, with the heart all eaten out of them by corroding cares. It is a losing business that we make of it, a wretched bankruptcy.

Wretched, indeed, it is when we think with what priceless advantages, with what abundant capital we start in life. With what ample endowment has the good God set us up! How brilliant our prospects! What a piece of work is man! "How," says the great poet, "how noble in reason, how infinite in faculty! In apprehension, how like a god!" With his miraculous intelligence, with conscience to distinguish the imperishable good from the deadly evil; with these hearts are we furnished, all alive with sympathies, whereby our being, and consequently our sense and enjoyment of life, may be deepened and enlarged without limit, and these mysterious souls, heaven-descended, one with the life and soul of all things, the born heirs and kings of all nature, able to command all circumstances and reduce them to our service. All this God-like power, what have we to show for it but a little glittering dust, perhaps, that we have heaped up, and that mocks us with its insufficiency to satisfy our hearts?

But hearken now, dear friends, to this strange voice that comes to us from the Past: "*We glory in tribulations*," exclaims the Apostle. What does it mean? Was Paul insane? Rejoice, exalt, *glory* in troubles! Did he know what he was talking about? No man better. He who thus uttered himself had, to all appearance, no peace of his life. It was nothing but trouble of the most serious kind, none of your petty

worries, wherever he went. Did he but open his lips, mobs roared around him. He was driven from city to city, whipped, stoned, left for dead, thrown into dungeons from which he had no hope of being released but by death. Did *He* know what trouble is? Apparently he knew nothing else. And if it was from a prison that he bade his brethren to rejoice in the Lord, always to rejoice, so far from being put out of heart, he was a very pattern of exultation. In all his troubles, he went triumphing on his way like a crowned conqueror, and as if flowers were strewed in his path at every step. Over a sea of troubles, upon the tossing waves, in which so many poor souls sink and die, he went as upon wings. It is true, sometimes, when in prison, he showed the weakness of our common nature and felt it would be a gain to die, but habitually he was all animation, bright and joyous as if life were a perpetual triumph. As he rose above all his tribulations, he became more and more conscious of power, of life, of an all-conquering and immortal hope.

I think we might all understand how it was with him. His mind was set, not on any combination of outward and precarious circumstances. His attention, his interest, his whole heart was given not to the visible, glitter and dazzle as it might, but to the invisible, the unchanging, the everlasting, to ideas that inspired him with a sense of an unspeakable good to be realized,

with a faith in Perfect Love as the inexhaustible Source of all Being, the supreme law of the Universe, with a hope that looked for a destiny beyond all that eye could see or heart conceive. He looked upon men not as mere animals, drudges, shadows, but as heaven-sent and heaven-bound existences, whether Jew or Gentile, slave or free, wise or simple, there was a glorious destiny for all. Such was his profound conviction. The pomp and splendors of the world had vanished from his view.

And to this faith he had been brought by what he had learned of the Man of Nazareth. Educated to esteem his own people as the only people that was cared for by Heaven, or was worth caring for, he at the first looked upon Jesus and his followers as the hateful enemies of all that he held sacred. He had persecuted them to the death. But the patience and love of the suffering Christians touched his heart, and in all that he learned of the Master, for love of whom they were ready to endure the worst that men could do to them, such a vision of the Highest and Holiest broke upon him, that his whole mind was revolutionized. His old faith had never so moved him. Such a love of God and man inspired him, that, catching the divine spirit of which the Cross of Christ was the symbol, he saw God and man and the whole world in a new light. He was, as he declared, in a new Creation. It was not possible for him to keep his faith to himself. Neces-



sity was upon him to publish to all the world the infinite good. He could suffer, he could die, but he could not disobey the heavenly vision. He must rescue his fellow men from their delusions and their sins, lift them up to the heavenly heights of faith and love and hope.

And here and thus it was that the storm of persecution broke upon him. The people could not understand him. Bound to their old habits, the slaves of their selfish appetites and interests, they could not conceive how a man could pursue a course that led to nothing apparently but danger and death. He was either an unprincipled knave or an egregious fool, bent, wherever he went, upon turning the world upside down, and therefore they stoned him, imprisoned him, and at last put him to death.

Troubled, yes, troubled he was on every side, but never cast down. And why? Because the more he was persecuted, the more was he driven in upon his faith, the richer grew his experience of its power to comfort and strengthen him. With experience came patience and hope, as he said, and thus his troubles were the open doors to the inner world of power and peace, and therefore he gloried in them. For what seemed visionary to the world, to him was real, *living* truth, fitted in the very nature of things, to give power to the soul, power to endure patiently, to resist temptation, to overcome the evil within, to purify and to save.

So it was that his troubles became to Paul occasions

of exultation. They made him feel the courage and power of his convictions, as he never could have felt them, had all things gone so smoothly, that he would never have been under the necessity of going within to the hidden springs of power. The sense of the new deeper life, which was created in him, he exhausted language in trying to express. It was a passing from death to life; it was a resurrection from the dead; it was being born again; it was entrance into another creation, from which old things had passed away and all had become new. It was the Grace, the Glory of the Infinite God. Surely, we all understand how it was with him from observation, if not from our own experience. Many a man, who has succeeded in life, has a like reason with the Apostle to thank Heaven for the difficulties which he has had to encounter and endure in early life.

So far from murmuring and allowing himself to be irritated or saddened by his tribulations, how could Paul help rejoicing in them since they were the means of letting him into a new and brighter world?

Now what are we to do in order to enter into communion and fellowship with the great Apostle? Simply this: Look the fact, the indisputable fact, full in the face. Give over the pursuit of appearances, and keep our eyes fixed on the case exactly as it is. And the case is, that troubles are inevitable. Our tears are not more a part of our nature than they, and they must be met. There is no evading them. And there

is another thing never to be forgotten : If an infinite wisdom and intelligence, and not a blind force, if Good and not Evil, in a word, if a fatherly love has the ordering of things, then is it a merciful arrangement that, being the creatures that we are, Life is made for us not smooth, but rough with troubles manifold. I speak not of what are considered afflictions, such as severe losses of health, wealth and friends, for, if we cannot bear ourselves as we should in little things, how shall we in great? I refer to little troubles which infest every household, however often it may ring with mirth and gladness, the troubles which command but little sympathy, the sudden and trying emergencies, the perplexities of conflicting duties, the antagonisms of temper and temperaments, the thousand and one annoyances from which no skulking, no dodging can save us, and by which domestic peace is often sadly wrecked. I tell you, friends, that wearing as they are to mortal flesh and blood, there is no such thing as living without them. Be assured they are busy little angels, greatly disguised it is true, looking to our bleared and tearful eyes as if they came from below, and not from above out of the bosom of the Infinite Goodness. They come not with flowers, but with whips to scourge us out of our slothful devotions to our own ease and drive us to seek the perennial fountains of strength and peace. Were it not for them we should

never be born into the new Creation in which Paul rejoiced. They drive us into the world within, which borders on the inexhaustible fulness,—the Grace of God, where flow rivers of life, of which when a man drinks he shall thirst no more.

Do they seem to us as if they came from the Evil One himself, charged to torment us? Ah! dear friends, the devil's imps come to us also disguised, but not after this fashion. They come in the garb of angels of light with white wings and robes, and flowers in which venomous serpents and insects are hidden. They bring us not patience and fortitude and hope, but sin and death.

Therefore, when we see our friends cast down and fretted by some homely trouble, by the difficulties of settling some affair that can neither be postponed nor evaded, shall we not in our hearts congratulate them? They are under the blessed necessity of seeking those same rivers of life which do not sweep their troubles away, but lift them above them.

I speak as unto the wise. Judge ye what I say.— Shall we not study the daily lessons that are set us, and get by heart the simple truth, that all our trials, great and small, are messengers from Heaven, the gracious ministry of Infinite Wisdom and Goodness which is to save us from the weakness that sends so many, weary and heart-sick, without faith or hope, to their graves?





BX      Furness, William Henry, 1802-1896.  
9843      The gospels, historical address delivered at  
F8      the Unitarian conference in Washington, D.C.,  
October 1895, and other sermons. Philadelphia,  
Unitarian Book Room Association, 1896.  
118p. 22cm.

1. Unitarian churches--Sermons.

333999

CCSC/ehw



